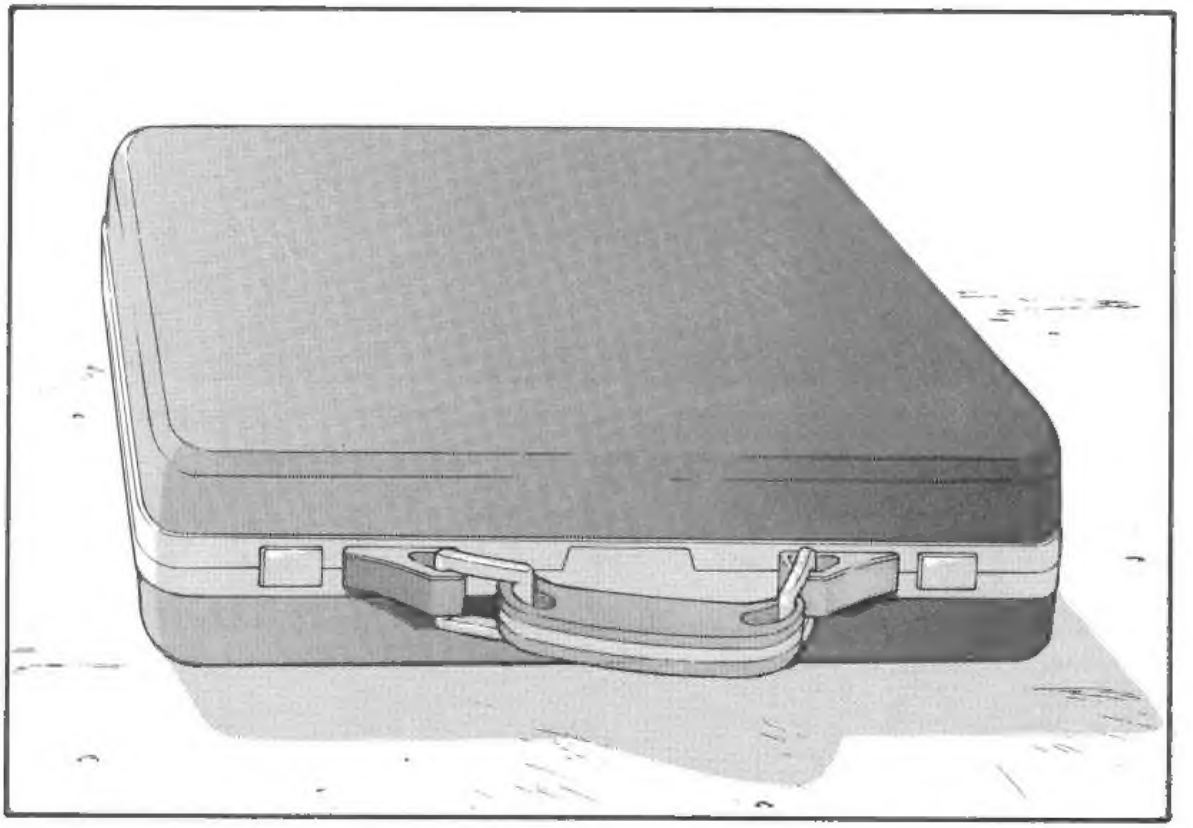
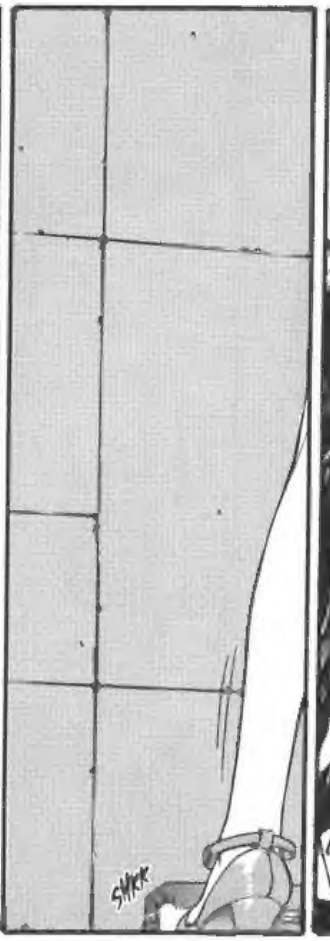
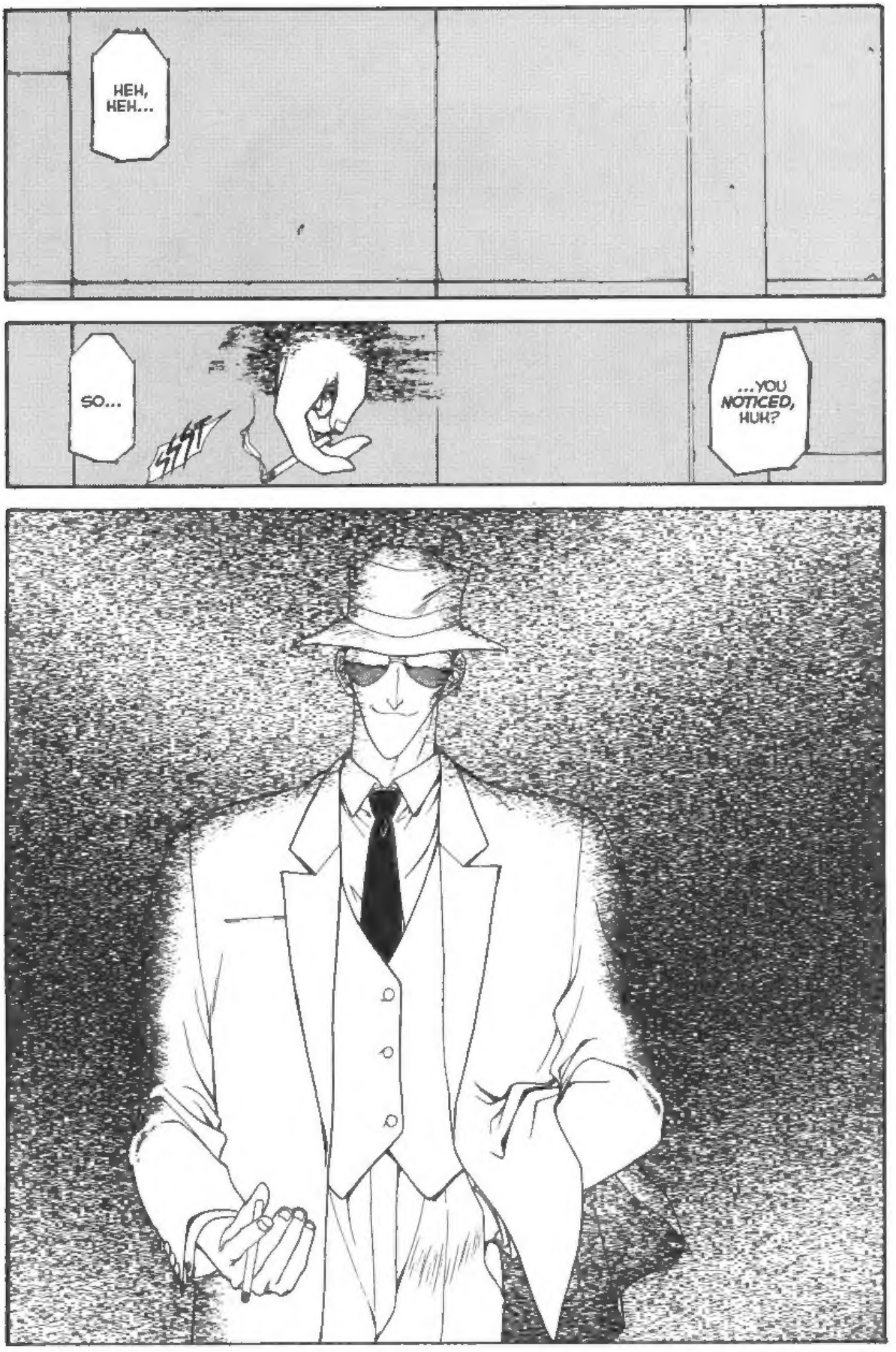
seeds of chaos




SNICK

YOU CAN SHOW YOUR-SELF, NOW.

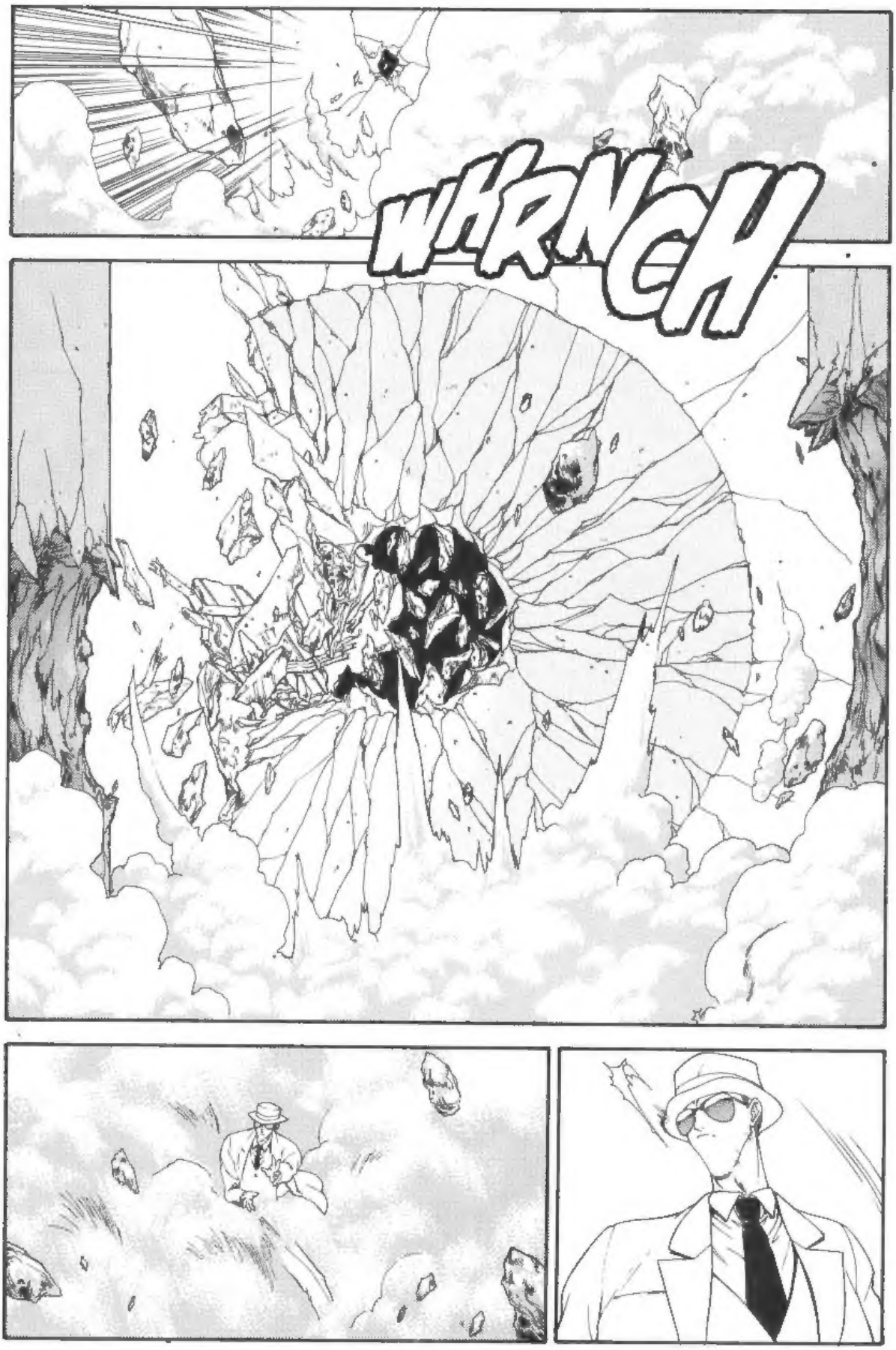

HEH, HEH...
SO...
SSST
...YOU NOTICED, HUH?

SERAPHIC
FEATHER
ACT 7

WALL-MOUNTED HOLOGRAPHIC CAMOUFLAGE? I'M IMPRESSED.
IT'S A PITY TO WASTE GOOD TECHNOLOGY ON SOMEONE WHO CAN'T APPRECIATE IT.
GLAD TO HEAR THAT.
SHRRK
YOU'RE GOOD, SPECIAL INVES-TIGATOR ATTIM M-ZAK.
OR SHOULD I CALL YOU "THE SCARLET ANGEL"? THAT'S THE NAME WHOSE SLIGHTEST MENTION MAKES HARDCORE TERRORISTS WET THEMSELVES, RIGHT?

WELL, "ANGEL," HAND OVER THAT SUITCASE. NOW.
HMM?
WHY DIDN'T YOU TAKE IT EARLIER, WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE...?
HEH, HEH...
VREEE
EEEE
I'M IN NO RUSH.
IF I'D JUST TAKEN IT AND RUN...
...I'D HAVE MISSED THE CHANCE...
VMMM
...TO SEND AN ANGEL TO HELL!

FZZK
SHREEE
WHROOOM


WHRNCH!

THARP
THARP
SHRKK

KREEK
FWOOSH
WHAT--?!
WISHH
WIND

SMACK

WHSHH
THWPP
VREEE

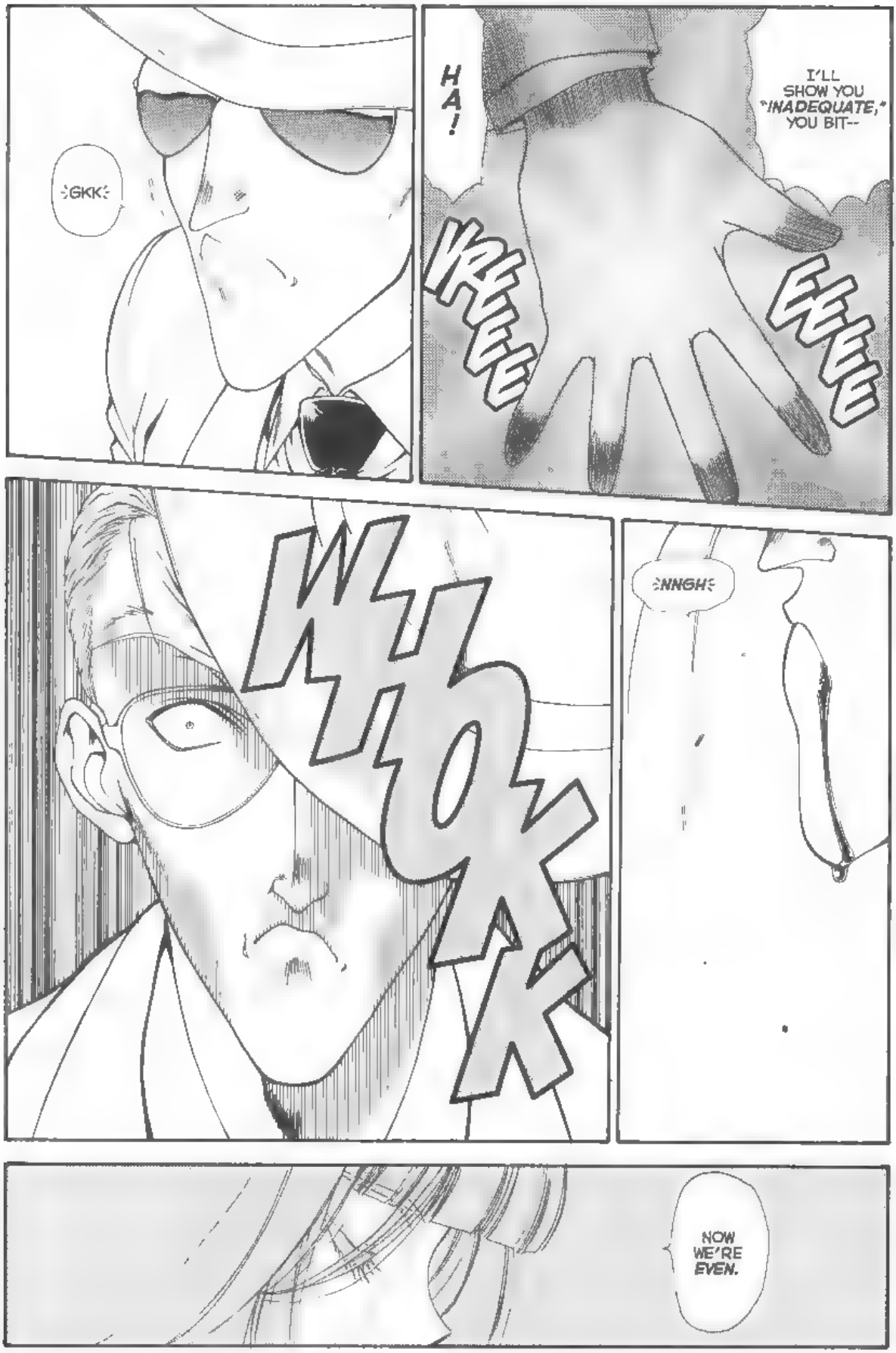
SHOOM
RMBBB
RMBBB
SKRAKK

WHDD
THMP
HMFF. PATHETIC.
I EXPECTED A LITTLE MORE FROM AN ANGEL-CLASS AUG...
...BUT, I GUESS, COMPARED TO OUR ALIEN TECH-NOLOGY...
...YOU'RE AS HOPELESS AS THE REST.
HEH.

HEH, HEH...!
AH HA HA HA!
WH... WHAT THE HELL...?!
HEE, HEE, HEE...
:sigh:
SO THAT'S ALL YOUR BIG, SCARY ALIEN TECHNOLOGY CAN DO...?
KCHIK
VWIP

THIS TIME, ALAS, I'M UNIM-PRESSED.
CAN'T... CAN'T FACE LOSING, CAN YOU...?
FWAPP
KLIK
LOSING ...? HMM...
SHKK
NO DOUBT, SOMEDAY I WILL LOSE...
SHKIK
HMMM

...BUT NOT *TODAY.*
AND CERTAINLY *NOT* TO AN OPPONENT AS, AH, *INADEQUATE* AS YOU...!

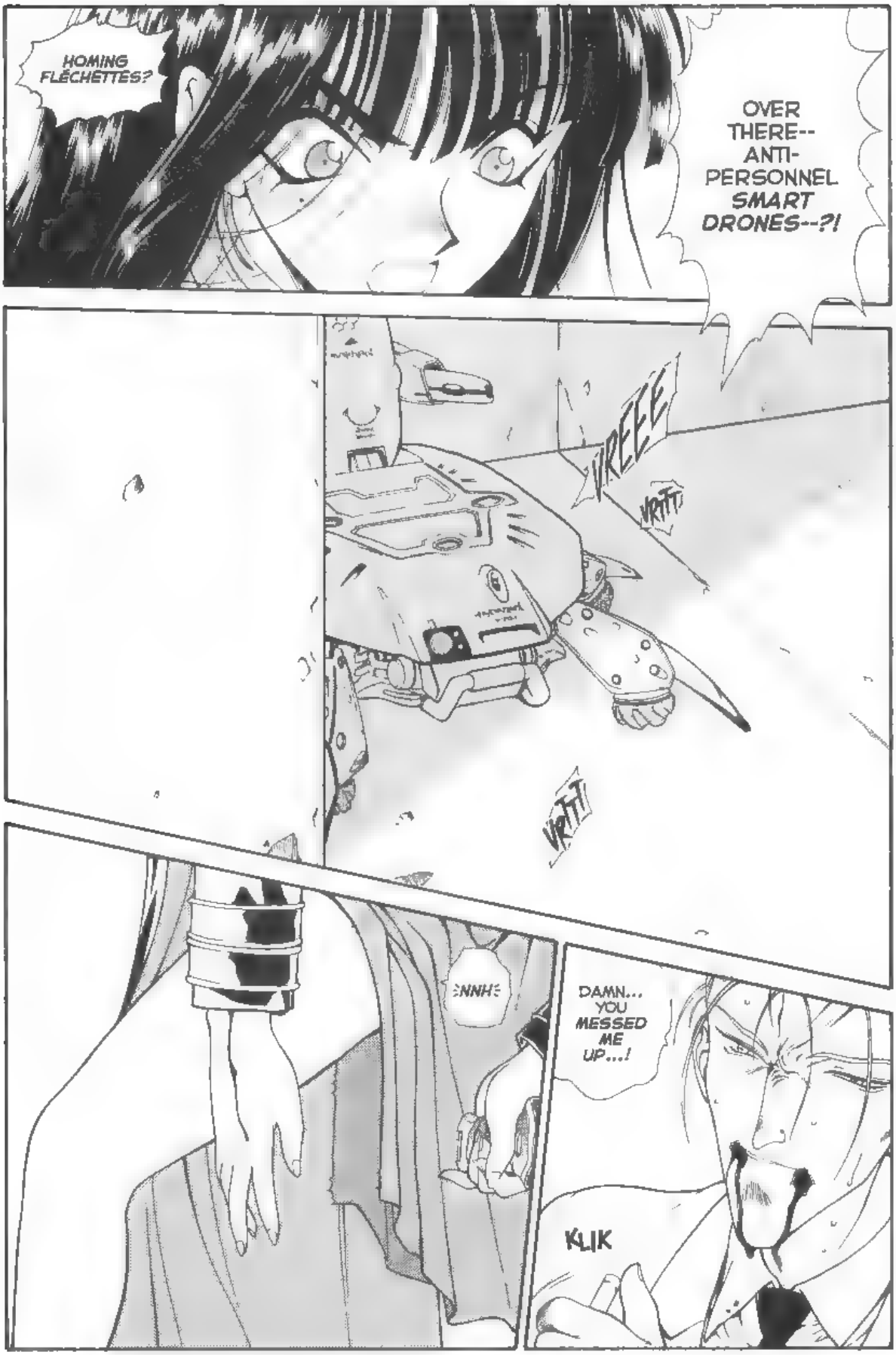

:GKK:
HA!
I'LL SHOW YOU "INADEQUATE," YOU BIT--
FREE
EEEE
WHOOK
:NNGH:
NOW WE'RE EVEN.

SO.
HOW DO YOU ENJOY HAVING A FEW OF YOUR RIBS BROKEN?
:GLKK:
:BLRKK:
:GUHH:

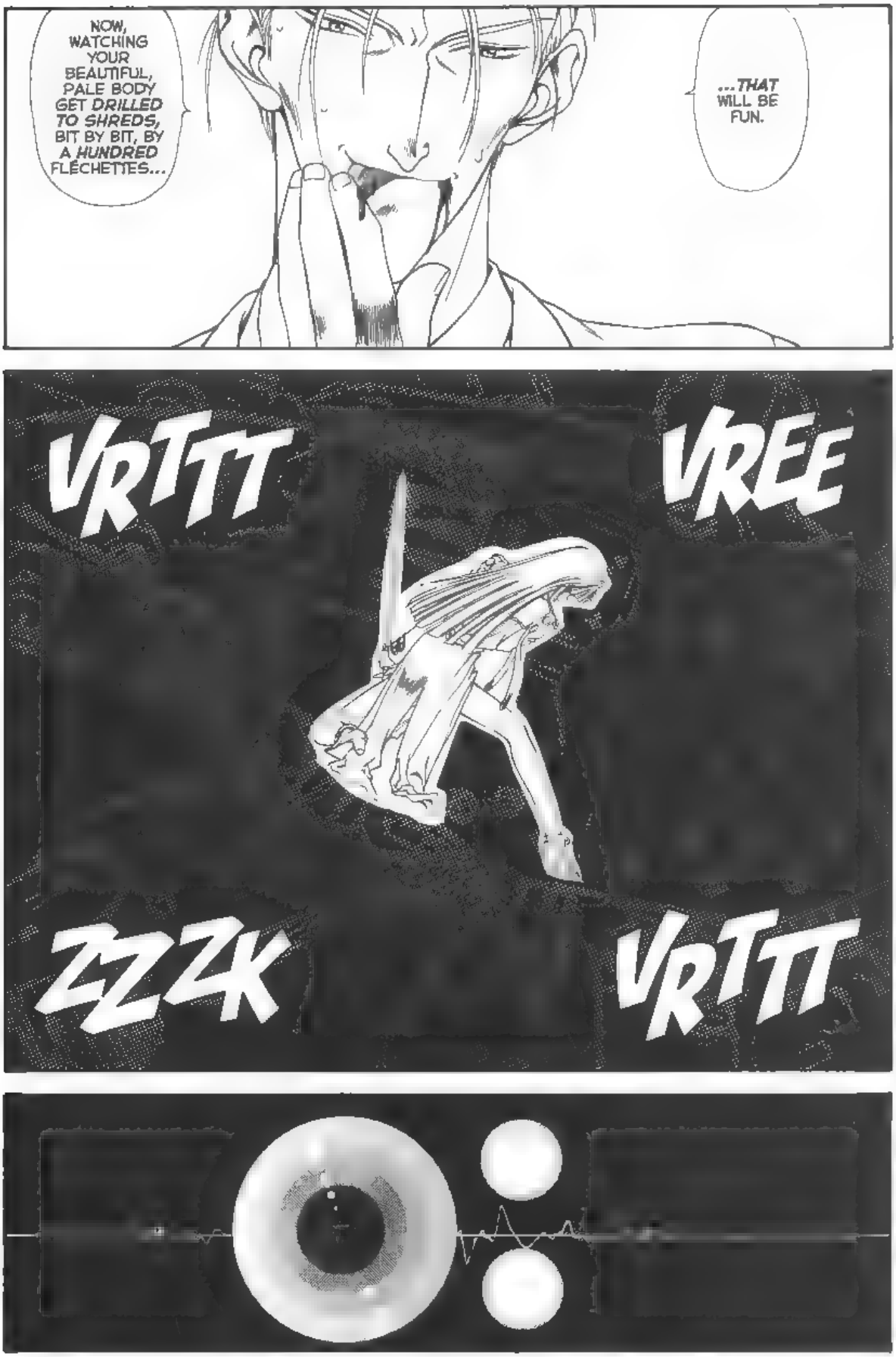
I PREFER A MORE HANDS-ON APPROACH THAN YOUR TELEKINETIC SHOCKWAVES, AS YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED...!
KSHINK
SO. WHO'S GIVING YOU ORDERS, HMM?
TELL ME.
FWTT
D-DAMN YOU...!
I'M ALREADY DAMNED, YOU FOOL.
NOW TALK, OR I'LL SHEAR YOUR HEAD OFF.
MY TEMPER'S A TAD SHORT, TODAY...
HHKK

WHSHH
?
!
FWOOSH

THOKK
THOKK
THOKK
THOKK
KTINGG
KTINGG
KTINGG
CHINGG


HOMING FLÉCHETTES?
OVER THERE-- ANTI-PERSONNEL SMART DRONES--?!
VREEE
VRITT
VRITT
ENNH
DAMN... YOU MESSED ME UP...!
KLIK

:HFF:
PSHHT
HEH... Y'REMEMBER THOSE *HOMING FLÉCHETTES,* DON'T YOU?
'COURSE YOU DO. SAME *AMMO,* SAME *SMART DRONES* YOU USED TO *WIPE OUT* NINETY-FIVE TERRORISTS IN THAT *ARCOSANTI* INCIDENT.
JUST *ONE* DRONE WOULD'VE BEEN ENOUGH... BUT OUT OF RESPECT FOR YOUR *AUGMENTED ABILITIES,* I BROUGHT *TWELVE* OF THEM.
YOU DON'T HAVE A *CHANCE IN HELL.*
IS THAT SO...?
:GKK:
SHLUKK
OH, DON'T *WORRY,* "ANGEL" ...
THOSE FLÉCHETTES *AREN'T* POISONED. *THAT* WOULDN'T BE *FUN,* Y'SEE-- TOO *QUICK.*
KINGG


NOW, WATCHING YOUR BEAUTIFUL, PALE BODY GET *DRILLED TO SHREDS,* BIT BY BIT, BY A *HUNDRED* FLÉCHETTES...
...*THAT* WILL BE FUN.
VRTTT
VREE
ZZZK
VRTTT

BMBB
WHKOOM
CHNKK
CHNKK
SPLPP
WHSHH
THWPP
:NNHH:

ACT 8

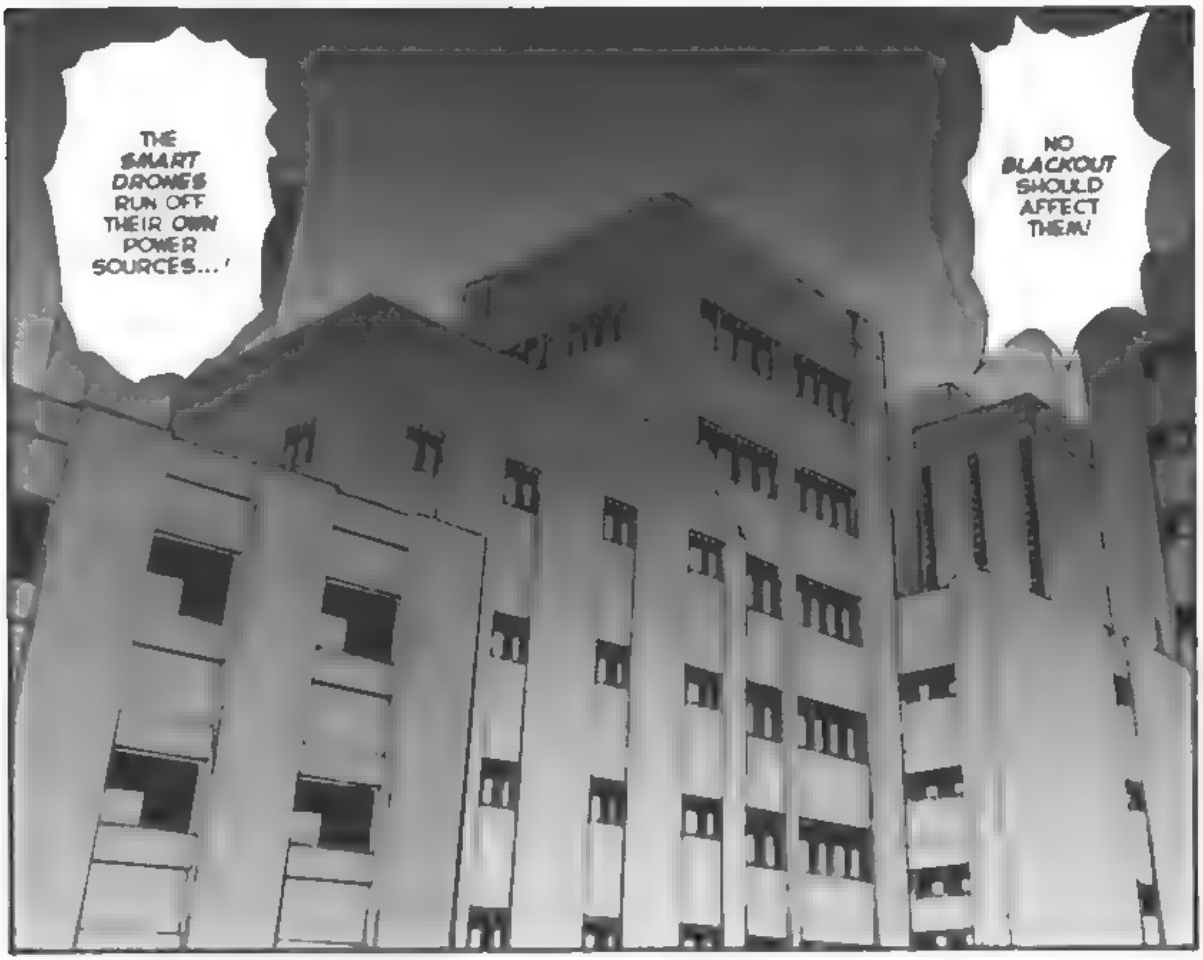
VREEEE
SLOOM

WHSHING
WHOOSH
CHING
NNG
THUD
VREEE

WHOOM
!
NFF
THMP
KREEE
YOU'RE FINISHED, BITCH!

KCHAK
!!
ZZLT
ZZZK
KCHAK
KLAK
?!

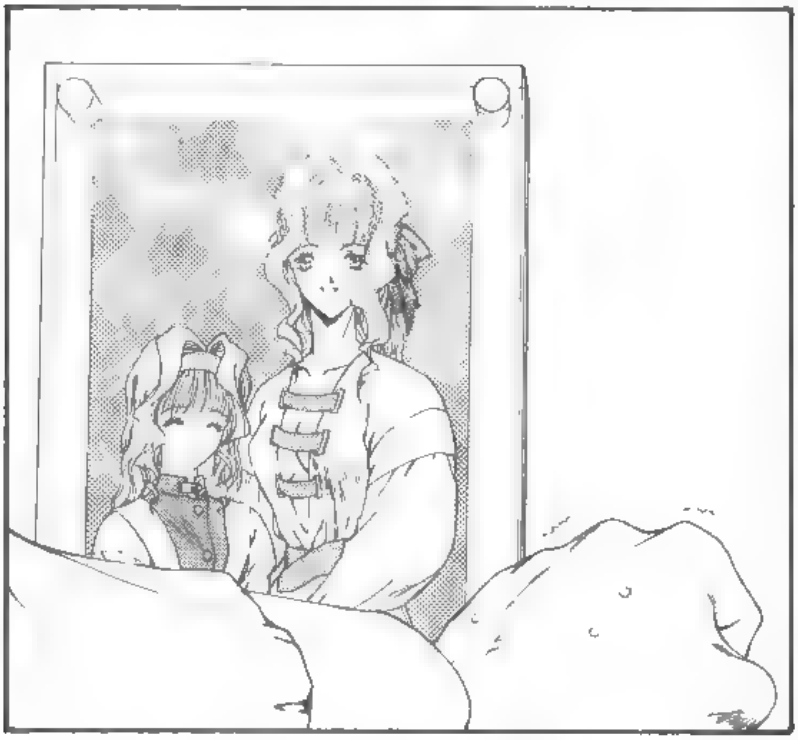
HUH?
A POWER OUTAGE ...?
WHAT THE HELL--?!

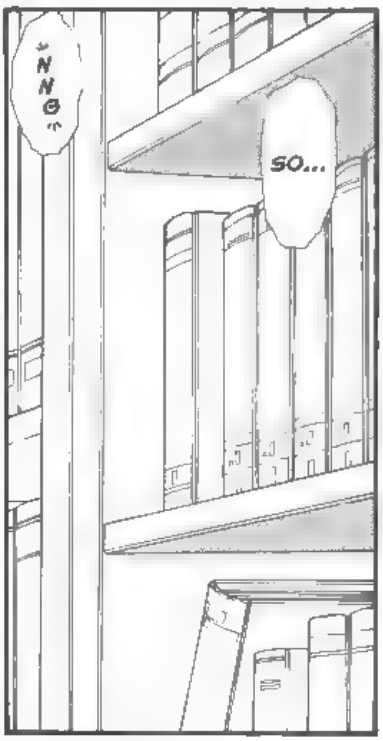

THE SMART DRONES RUN OFF THEIR OWN POWER SOURCES...!
NO BLACKOUT SHOULD AFFECT THEM!

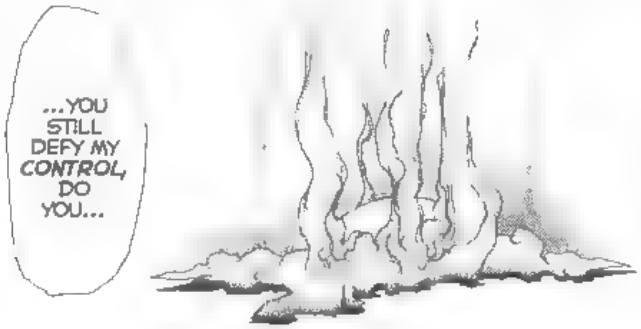
VMM
MMM

THAT'S ODD... EVEN THE EMERGENCY PHONE IS OUT...!
AND OUR POWER GRID IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE MASSIVE BUILT-IN REDUNDANCY...
FZZK
OH!
FSSH
PLINKK
:HAHH:
:HAHH:
:HUHH:
:HAHH:

"HUH?"




"NNG"
SO...


...YOU STILL DEFY MY CONTROL, DO YOU...
...MY UNCOOPERATIVE LITTLE G-SEED...?
FHSSSSS

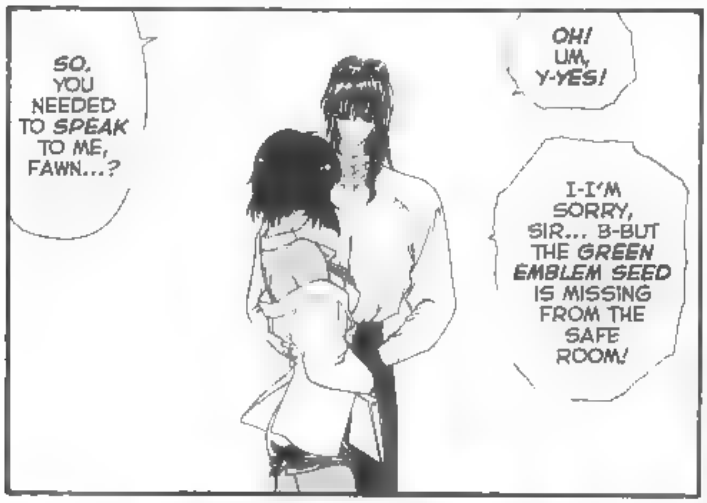
SO BE IT.
BUT SOON, I WILL--
BREEEP
HELLO, APEP! ♥ IT'S ME, FAWN IRIS!
COME.
AHEM.
KOFF
PSHFT

WELL! WAS THAT POWER OUTAGE BIZARRE, OR--
--WHAT ...?
OH, MY...!

COME TO THINK OF IT, YOU'VE NEVER SEEN MY *STUDY* BEFORE...
...*HAVE* YOU?
AM I *SO* VERY UNUSUAL, FAWN?
TO TAKE *PLEASURE* IN SUCH *RARITIES* AS THESE...?
UM...UM, *NO*, SIR!
B-BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY *BOOKS* MADE OF *PAPER* BEFORE...
...EXCEPT IN *LIBRARIES*, ON *EARTH*...!

AH, YES. ALMOST *ALL* LITERATURE IS IN *ELECTRONIC FORM* NOW, ISN'T IT?

MAKING MY COLLECTION A TROVE OF *ARTIFACTS*, REALLY.


SO. YOU NEEDED TO *SPEAK* TO ME, FAWN...?
OH! UM, Y-*YES!*
I-I'M SORRY, SIR... B-BUT THE *GREEN EMBLEM SEED* IS MISSING FROM THE SAFE ROOM!

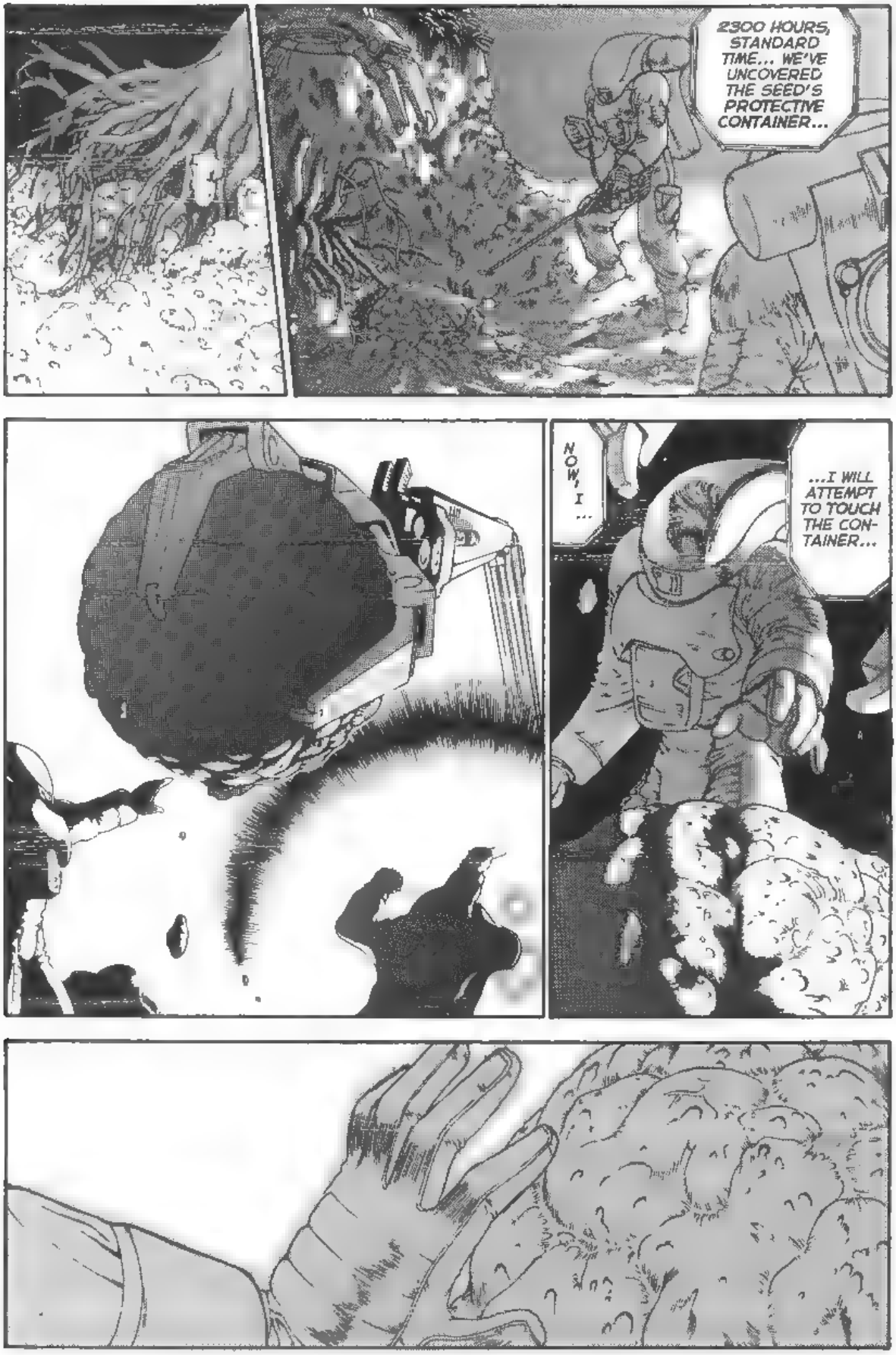
HMM...?
UH-HUH

THE "G-SEED" IS *MISSING?*
THIS IS *INEXCUS-ABLE!*

.....
.....
:SIGH:
ALL RIGHT, FAWN. YOU KNOW ME TOO WELL.
I BORROWED THE G-SEED.
AH, HAH!
NOW, SIR-- THIS .S TOO MUCH! THE ACTING DIRECTOR HIMSELF, CASUALLY BREAKING ALL THE RULES!
MY SINCEREST APOLOGIES, FAWN. I'LL TRY TO BE MORE RESPONSIBLE IN THE FUTURE...!
SHALL I SHOW YOU SOMETHING NOVEL, TO MAKE UP FOR MY TRANSGRESSION ...?
UM... SUCH AS...?
SECRET
AAA

WHAT'S THIS...?
A CLASSIFIED VIDEO FILE, SEEN THUS FAR ONLY BY WORTHIES SUCH AS TOP U.N. OFFICIALS AND THE EXECUTIVES OF DYKSTRA CORPORATION...
...BUT I'VE BEEN WAITING TO SHOW IT TO YOU, FAWN.
THIS FILE DOCUMENTS THE DISCOVERY OF THE GREEN EMBLEM SEED, YOU SEE.
UM... REALLY ...?
=HAHH=
THE G-SEED WAS UNEARTHED, PARDON THE PHRASE, IN A CRATER ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE MOON...
...IN A MOST UNUSUAL LUNAR ENVIRON-MENT...

IT'S SCARCELY BELIEVABLE, I KNOW...
...BUT HERE ON THE MOON...IN THIS AIRLESS, BARREN WASTELAND...WE'VE FOUND A FORESTED OASIS...!
THIS IS NO HALLUCIN-ATION, EITHER...!
OUR INSTRUMENTS CONFIRM THAT THIS FOLIAGE ZONE EXTENDS FOR FULLY A KILOMETER IN DIAMETER...
WHAT? HOW CAN THIS BE...?
ACCORDING TO OUR INITIAL SURVEY, THERE SHOULD BE AN EMBLEM SEED AT THE CENTER OF THIS...MOST ANOMALOUS GROVE.
WE'RE COMMENCING EXCAVATION.


2300 HOURS, STANDARD TIME... WE'VE UNCOVERED THE SEED'S PROTECTIVE CONTAINER...
NOW, I ...
...I WILL ATTEMPT TO TOUCH THE CONTAINER...

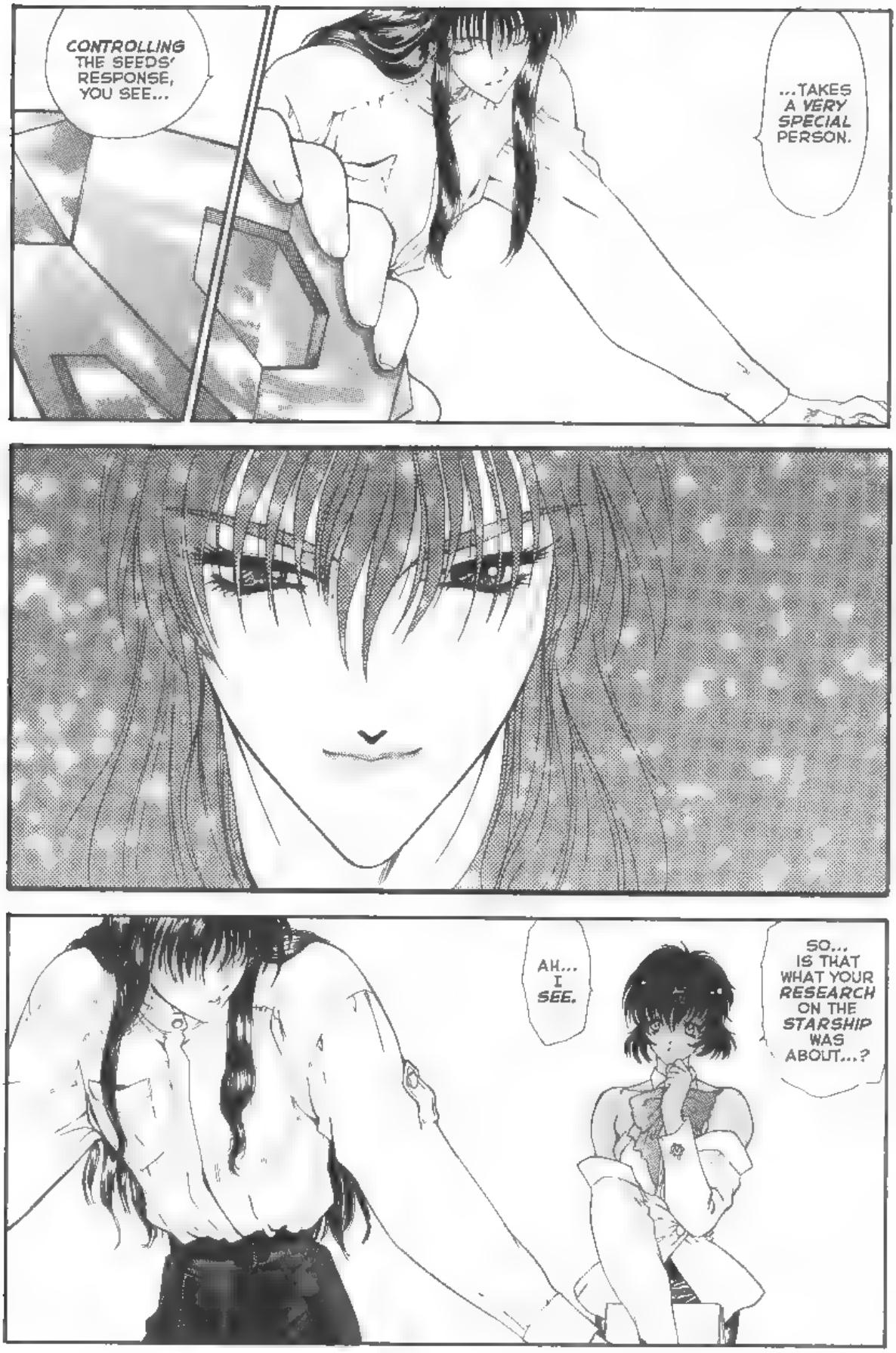
KSHHH
WELL? FAWN...?
A-APEP...! HOW COULD THERE POSSIBLY BE FOLIAGE ON THE MOON? IN HARD VACUUM?
AND HOW COULD A CENTURY OF LUNAR SURVEYS HAVE MISSED SOMETHING LIKE THIS?
IT JUST CAN'T BE--!!
BECAUSE IT WASN'T THERE.
HUH?
JUST TWELVE HOURS BEFORE THAT VIDEO FILE WAS RECORDED...
...THAT CRATER WAS UTTERLY EMPTY AND LIFELESS...!

ACT 9

THE CRATER WAS EMPTY ...?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, APE?
THAT WHOLE FOREST JUST SPROUTED OVERNIGHT ..?
BUT ..
THE EMBLEM SEED EXPEDITION INADVERTENTLY CREATED THAT FLORA, YOU SEE

THAT HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS *PERCEIVED* THE SEED, THE FOREST *INSTANTLY* SPRANG INTO BEING.
WHOLE AND *COMPLETE*, AS IF IT HAD
DECAUSE SOMEBODY *PERCEIVED* THE EMBLEM SEED...?

FAWN...
THE EMBLEM SEEDS RESPOND POWERFULLY TO HUMAN PERCEPTION.
A BOY TOO
IN FACT
SO
CATASTROPHE, AS THE EXPEDITION DID...!


CONTROLLING THE SEEDS' RESPONSE, YOU SEE...
...TAKES A VERY SPECIAL PERSON.
SO... IS THAT WHAT YOUR RESEARCH ON THE STARSHIP WAS ABOUT...?
AH... I SEE.

WE FOUND *THREE* EMBLEM SEEDS ON THE STARSHIP.
A TECHNO-LOGICAL *GIFT* FROM THE *STAR PEOPLE*...

AH... EMBLEM SEEDS.
CREATING LIFE OUT OF NOTHINGNESS. UNRAVELING AND REKNITTING THE VERY FABRIC OF THE MULTIVERSE.
A STRAIN OF THE ULTIMATE TECH-NOLOGY.
WHOEVER CONTROLS THE SEEDS, CONTROLS THE INFINITE WORLDS OF QUANTUM REALITY.
AND UNLOCKING THE SECRETS OF THESE SEEDS CAN HELP US UNLOCK THE EVEN GREATER SECRETS OF THE STAR PEOPLE THEMSELVES.

THE *UNITED NATIONS* ORIGINALLY BUILT THIS FACILITY TO FIND PEOPLE WHO COULD *CONTROL* THE POWER OF THE SEEDS.
SO FAR, THEY'VE SUCCEEDED IN FINDING ONLY *TWO* SUCH PEOPLE...
BUT... THE EMBLEM SEED DOESN'T *LOOK* SO DANGEROUS, YOU KNOW...!
NOT SO LONG AS IT'S SECURED IN THIS *CASE*... WHICH COST US SO *DEARLY* TO PERFECT...

...AND NOT SO LONG AS I AM HERE.
I, WHO POSSESS THE WILL AND THE POWER...
...TO UN-LEASH THE ENERGY OF THE SEEDS.
APER...!

WSHHHNGG

WHSHH
BKOOM
WHKOOM
WHKOOM
WHKOOM
CHOM

KTANG!
SHUKK
UH...?

I'LL TAKE MY SUITCASE, NOW... IF YOU PLEASE.
OR I'LL TAKE YOUR HEAD.

AAA...
PUPP
PURPP
AAAA
:GAHH:
:NNGH:
:AAAGH:
SUPP
THUD THUD
HEH... T-TRUSTING IN TOYS...
...C-COST ME MORE THAN I THOUGHT.

BUT I'LL BE SURE TO PAY YOU BACK...
KCHNKK
...WITH INTEREST--
ATTIM M-ZAK!
WH
SHH
NOT SO FAST--!
WHHSH
!
THPP

A SNIPER...?
FWHTT
FWHT

SPRAK

HUH?
HOW COULD SHE DODGE--
WHSHH
?!
NO... NO, THIS CAN'T BE--!
KCHAK
SHI INGG

SHE... SHE'S NOT HUMAN--!
OH, PHOOEY. I MISSED ...?

OUCH.
WELL... TIME TO BUY SOME NEW CLOTHES, I GUESS.
sighh
AND I LIKED THESE SHOES, TOO...

Act 10

ATTENTION ALL RESTAURANT CUSTOMERS...WE DEEPLY REGRET THE INCONVENIENCE, BUT WE MUST ASK YOU TO REMAIN HERE UNTIL THE POLICE HAVE COMPLETED THEIR QUESTIONING. WE HAVE ARRANGED PRIVATE ROOMS FOR--
UM, WELL...
UM, [illegible] YOU DO KNOW THAT WHAT ATTIM SAID ISN'T TRUE, RIGHT?
I...I'M NOT,

IT'S JUST... I MEAN, KEI, YOU LOOK EXACTLY LIKE A GIRL I ADORED WHEN I WAS YOUNG.
YOU EVEN HAVE THE SAME NAME... IT'S EERIE...!
EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU... YOUR PERSONALITY... E-EVEN YOUR SMELL... IS JUST LIKE HER.
!
J-JEEZ! THAT'S NOT VERY NICE!
NO GIRL LIKES TO BE COMPARED TO A GUY'S OLD GIRL-FRIEND...!
BUT YOU'RE JUST AS WONDERFUL AS HER, TOO...
PARDON ME, SIR. YOUR PRIVATE ROOM IS READY.
HUH? OH!
THE MAITRE D'...!
SAY... THOSE TERRORISTS WERE TALKING TO YOU, WEREN'T THEY...?

?!
WHY ARE YOU CARRYING A GUN?
EEK!
COME ON, KEI!!
KOHAK
KOHAK

Y-Y-
YES,
SUNAO...?
THAT GUY HAD A GUN... HE MUST BE ONE OF THE TERRORISTS!
HAH ...?
OH, RIGHT! I AM SO SURE...!
:GIGGLE:
YOU'RE SUCH A LIAR, COMING UP WITH SO SILLY A STORY TO GET ME ALONE...!
SOMEHOW... I SAW IT... UNDER HIS JACKET.
BUT I'VE NEVER HAD THAT META-TALENT BEFORE...
BAM
BAM

WHAM!!!
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE *DONE* THAT, SIR. WE EXPECT OUR "CUSTOMERS" TO BE MORE... *COOPERATIVE.*
KLIK
KCHAK

NO!
STOP!
G-GET BACK OR I'LL SHOOT!
OH, REALLY?
WILL YOU, NOW?
NO! GET BACK!
I'LL DO IT!!
KCHIK

KCHIK KCHIK
KCHIK KCHIK
M-MAYBE IT'S OUT OF *BULLETS*...?
HEH
FOOLISH *AMATEUR*...!
THAT'S A *SMART GUN*, PROGRAMMED TO FIRE ONLY FOR ITS *LICENSED OWNER*. IT'S USELESS IN *YOUR* HANDS!

WHOKK
SUNAO--!
THUD
KSHNKK
:HKK·
GUHK
SPLIPP

SUNAO!
OH, S-SUNAO...! ARE... ARE YOU...
WHAT... WHAT A JOKE...
I...I'M SORRY, KEI... GUESS I'M JUST A WIMP... I CAN'T...
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING...? Y-YOU'RE A MAN! ACT LIKE ONE, WILL YOU?!

...RIGHT.
WHOOSH
KLANGG
HEH
OOH! YOU'RE HOPE-LESS!
SPLSHH
CHNKK
L-LEAVE US ALONE--!
WHSHH
SHKK

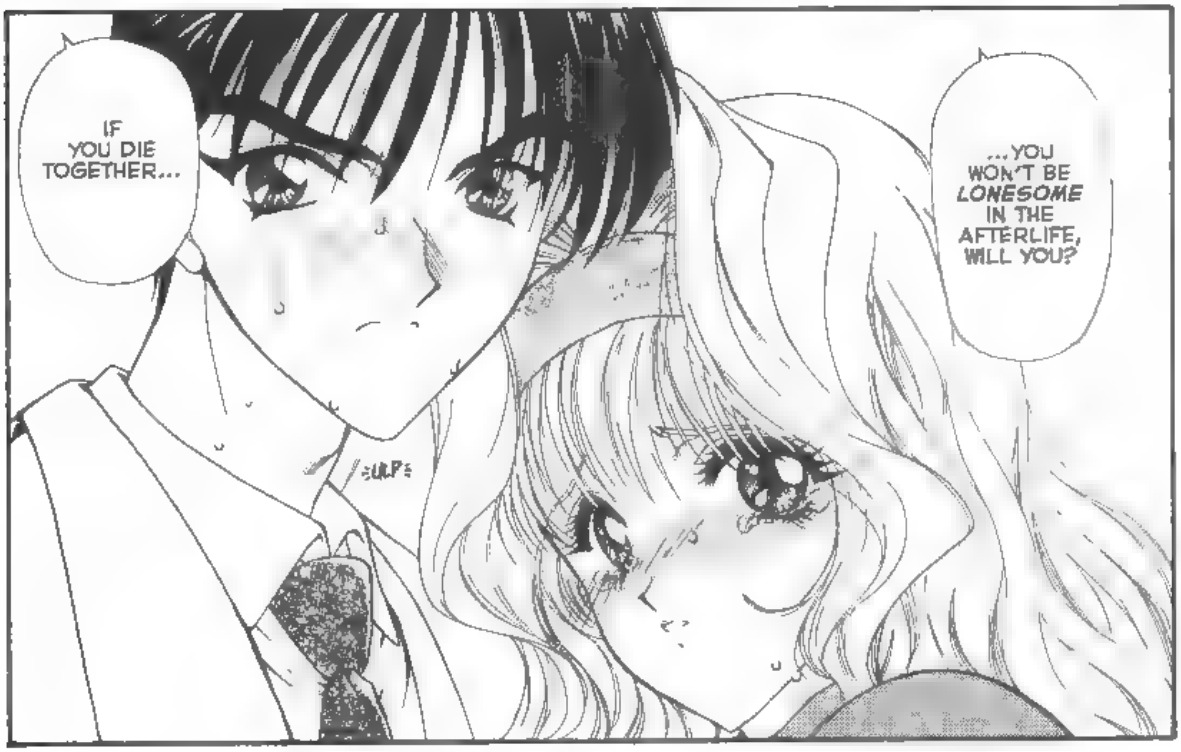
NNG
GASH
YOU... YOU DARE TO HARM ME...?
I WAS PLANNING TO MERELY WIPE YOUR MEMORIES, LIKE THE OTHER GUESTS BUT NOW...
EEK!
EEK!
WHSSH
WHSSH
KRAK
KSHNKK
TINKK
KCHNKK

IT'S OVER...
EEK! SUNAO...!
KRAK
KSHNKK

Act 11

Package illustration for the Max Factory Co. garage kit (line drawing version)

AH, I LOVE IT... THOSE TERRIFIED EYES... THE SIGHT OF YOUR FEAR REALLY GETS MY BLOOD PUMPING, YOU KNOW...!
I'D DEARLY LOVE TO SAVOR YOUR NAKED TERROR A LITTLE LONGER...
...BUT, ALAS, YOUR TIME IS UP.


IF YOU DIE TOGETHER...
...YOU WON'T BE LONESOME IN THE AFTERLIFE, WILL YOU?

SO...
=SHUPP=
...NOW YOU DIE.
WHSHH
KRAK
KSHHNK

?!
I NEVER MISS!
KRAK
KRAK
TINK
KCHNKK
KRAK
KCHNKK
SKRKK

SPANG
YOU'RE A PSYCHO-KINETIC--?!
NYAAAA
WHIP
THMP

SKR
ASH
KCHNKK
THOKK

NNNN
BURP
BURP
IS.. IS HE OUT?!
OH, SUNAO! ARE YOU
FWAPP

Y-YOU... PUNK...
Y-YOUR DEATH... GONNA MAKE IT SLOW...
...AND VERY P-PAINFUL...
SHUKK

WHUH...?
AAA
AAAAAAA

VMMMMM
NNN
GKK
CHUNK
CHUNK
...PUH... PLEASE... DON'T...
WUH... WAIT...
SHKK

SLAPP
D-DON'T LOOK, KEI...!
WHSHH
VMMM

THUD
SPLSHH

VRMMMMM

VRM MMM

W-WHAT...
...WHAT THE HELL...
...IS THIS THING...?

KILLED HIM

SAVED US

WE'RE ALIVE

BUT WHY?

UNDER THAT MASK

IS IT A MAN? A MACHINE?

RIPPED HIS HEART OUT

WALKED THROUGH THE WALL

...I'VE GOT TO PROTECT KEI...!
TAK

WH...

WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH US--?
EEK! SUNAO, NO!!

HAMP

WHOK
SKRAK
SPLIT

SNAP
GUKK
EEYAAAA

STOP IT!
D-DON'T HURT HIM...!
!
VMM
MMM
ZZZK
FZZK

VREEE
ZZSH
dOOM
SPLSH
NO...
NO...
MAKE IT
STOP...!
ZZSHH
NO

NOO!
VHHHH

VREEEE
VHHH

ZZK SPZK
ZZAK
AAA?!
VIIIIII
BOOM

Act 12

ZZZK

NNGH
FZZT
FZZT
ZZZK

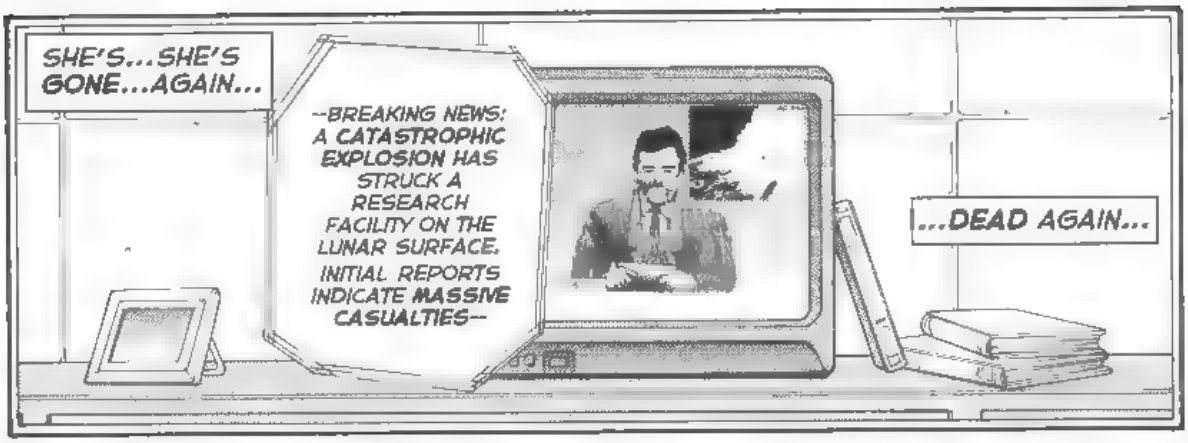
WHAT...
BWEEE
...WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME...?
F-FEEL LIKE...
...MY HEART'S GOING TO...
...EXPLODE...
SHKK

NUMB...

...WHOLE BODY NUMB...

HUH?
KEI...?
!?
SLIP
SLIP
NUH...
NO...

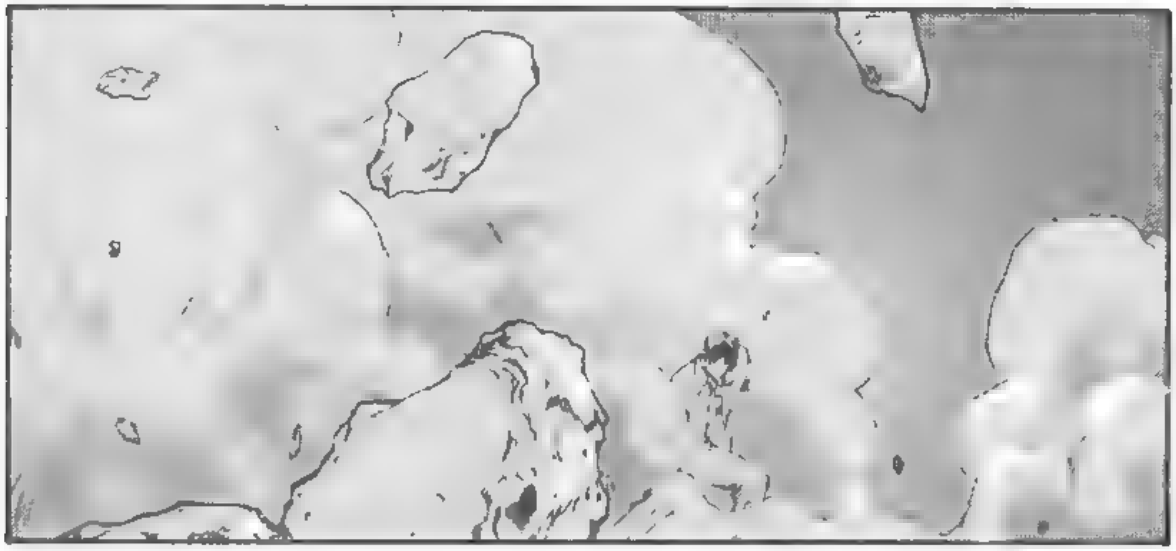
NOT...
...NOT AGAIN...


SHE'S...SHE'S GONE...AGAIN...
--BREAKING NEWS: A CATASTROPHIC EXPLOSION HAS STRUCK A RESEARCH FACILITY ON THE LUNAR SURFACE. INITIAL REPORTS INDICATE MASSIVE CASUALTIES--
...DEAD AGAIN...

...BEFORE I COULD TELL HER ANYTHING...
:HKK:
:HKK:

:NNG:

WHAK



VREEE
KCHIK
KCHIK
KRAKK!!!

WHSHH
SWEEEE

BWEEEEEEEEEEE
WHAT... WHAT THE HELL...?
THAT LIGHT... CAN'T SEE...!
BLRPP
BLRPP

VMMMM
KRAK
KRAK
SPRAAAK

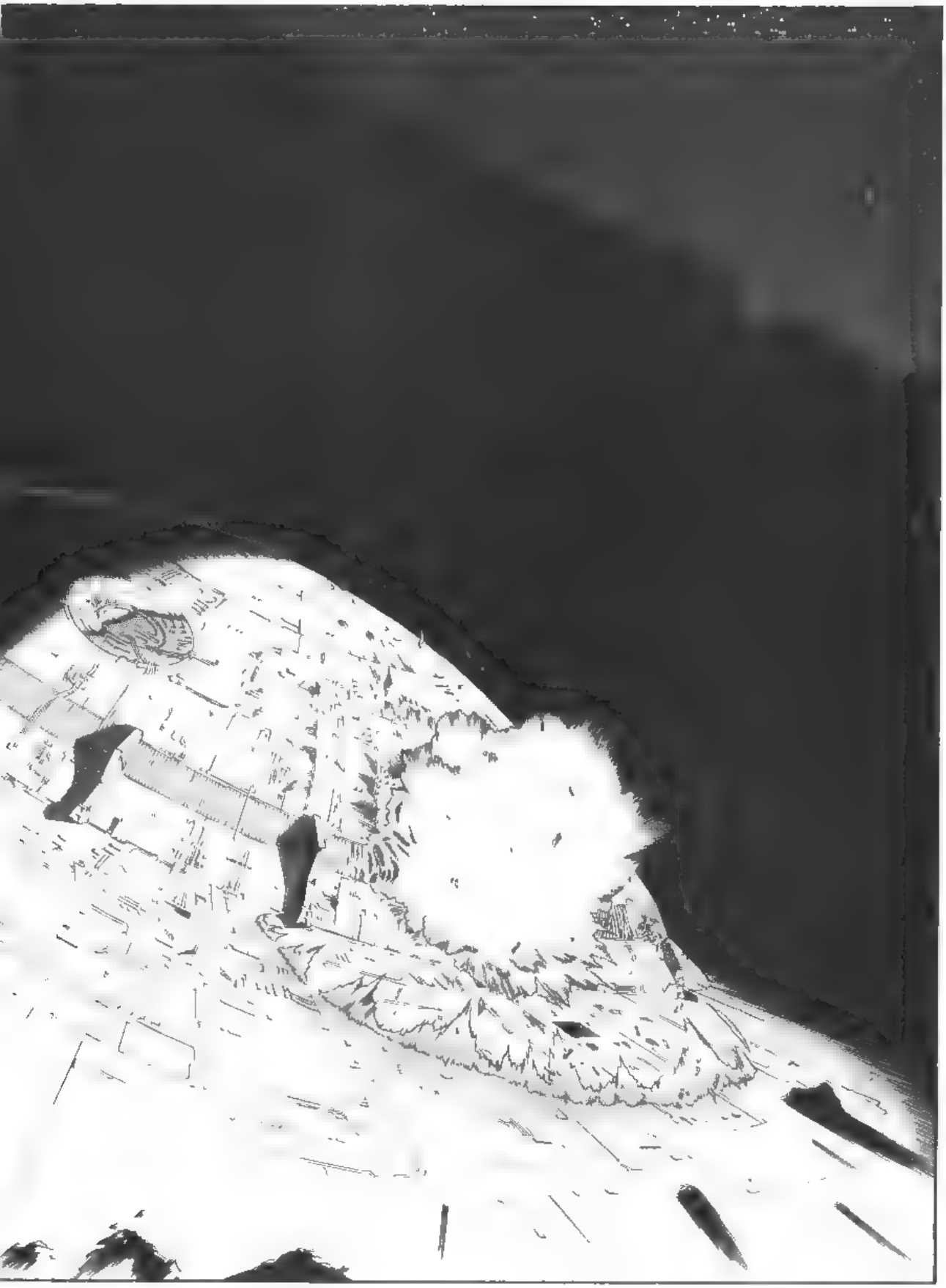
K-KEI...?

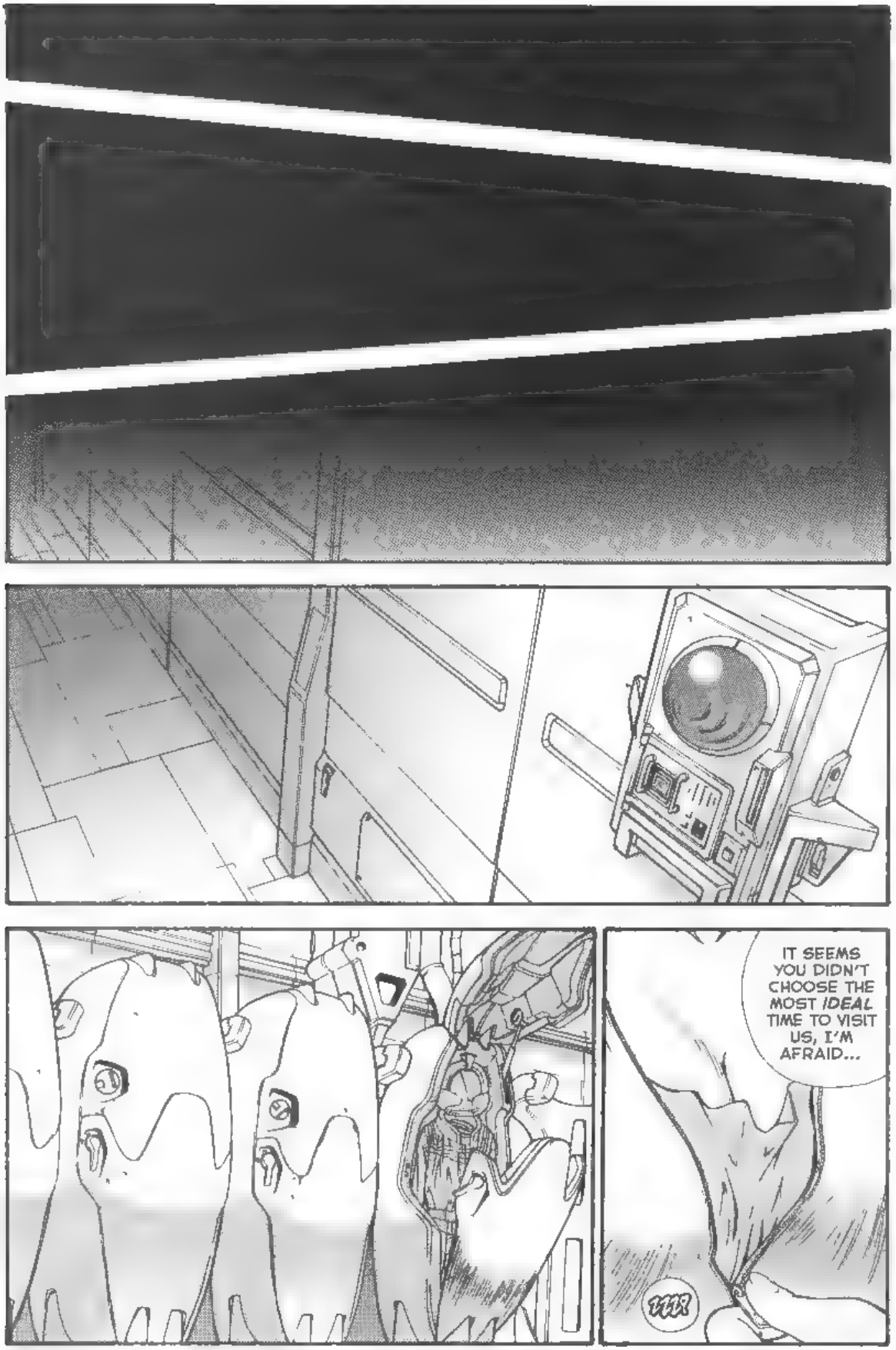
KEI--?!
:NNHH:
HOW DID... HOW DID YOU... KEI...?
KEI...!

KEI ...?!
WEE OOO
WEE OOO
HIKARU... TAKE KEI AND GET TO THE SHELTER.
I MUST FIND FATHER AND PUT OUR PLAN INTO ACTION.

YES, DEAR!
UM, APEP...? W-WILL EVERY-THING BE ALL RIGHT ...?
DON'T WORRY, DEAR SISTER.
WE'LL LURE THEM DOWN TO THE SURFACE AND DESTROY THEM. OUR BAIT WILL DRAW THEM IN.
THE EMBLEM SEED... HUMANITY'S TRUMP CARD!

ACT 13




IT SEEMS YOU DIDN'T CHOOSE THE MOST *IDEAL* TIME TO VISIT US, I'M AFRAID...
TTTR

...BUT THINK OF IT *THIS* WAY-- MANY PEOPLE *PAY* TO HAVE *ADVENTURES* ON THEIR VACATIONS...
...YET YOU'RE GETTING *THIS* EXCITING EXPERIENCE FOR *FREE*, KEI!
YOU WANT ME TO THINK OF *THIS*...
...AS SOME KIND OF *ADVENTURE TOUR*...?
WELL, WHY NOT?
HMFF.
HEY, SPEAKING OF *ADVENTURE*... HOW ABOUT TELLING ME SOME *JUICY DETAILS* ABOUT YOUR *NEWLYWED EXPERIENCE*, SIS?

NO "JUICY DETAILS" FOR YOU...
...YOU NAUGHTY LITTLE GIRL...!
OW...!
THAPP

PSSHT
HIKARU. KEI. WE'RE MOVING OUT.
ARE YOU READY...?
KI
AH... WHAT'S WRONG...?

D-DON'T LOOK...! TH THIS NASTY PRESSURE SUIT SHOWS EVERYTHING...!
SHE'S AT THAT SENSITIVE AGE, DEAR.
TEE HEE..!
MOVE THAT ADORABLE LITTLE BEHIND, SIS!
SMAK
EEK!

H H-
HIKARU...!
THAT
WAS
MEAN!
HA HA
HA HA!
HEE,
HEE,
HEE!
CAN
YOU
BELIEVE
IT,
APEP?
I WAS AN
INNOCENT
LITTLE
TH NG
LIKE KEI,
ONCE...!

WELL.
WERE YOU, NOW...?
THIS IS THE ONLY "YOU" I KNOW...
RIGHT, RIGHT. VERY ROMANTIC.
SAVE IT FOR THE BEDROOM, YOU LOVE-BIRDS.
ANYWAY, WE GOTTA GO, RIGHT? NO TIME TO LOSE, YOU SAID...!
I CAN ESCORT YOU AS FAR AS LEVEL TWO, BUT THE SHELTER'S DOWN ON--
I KNOW, APEP. I WORK HERE TOO, REMEMBER?

BREEP
KCHNKK

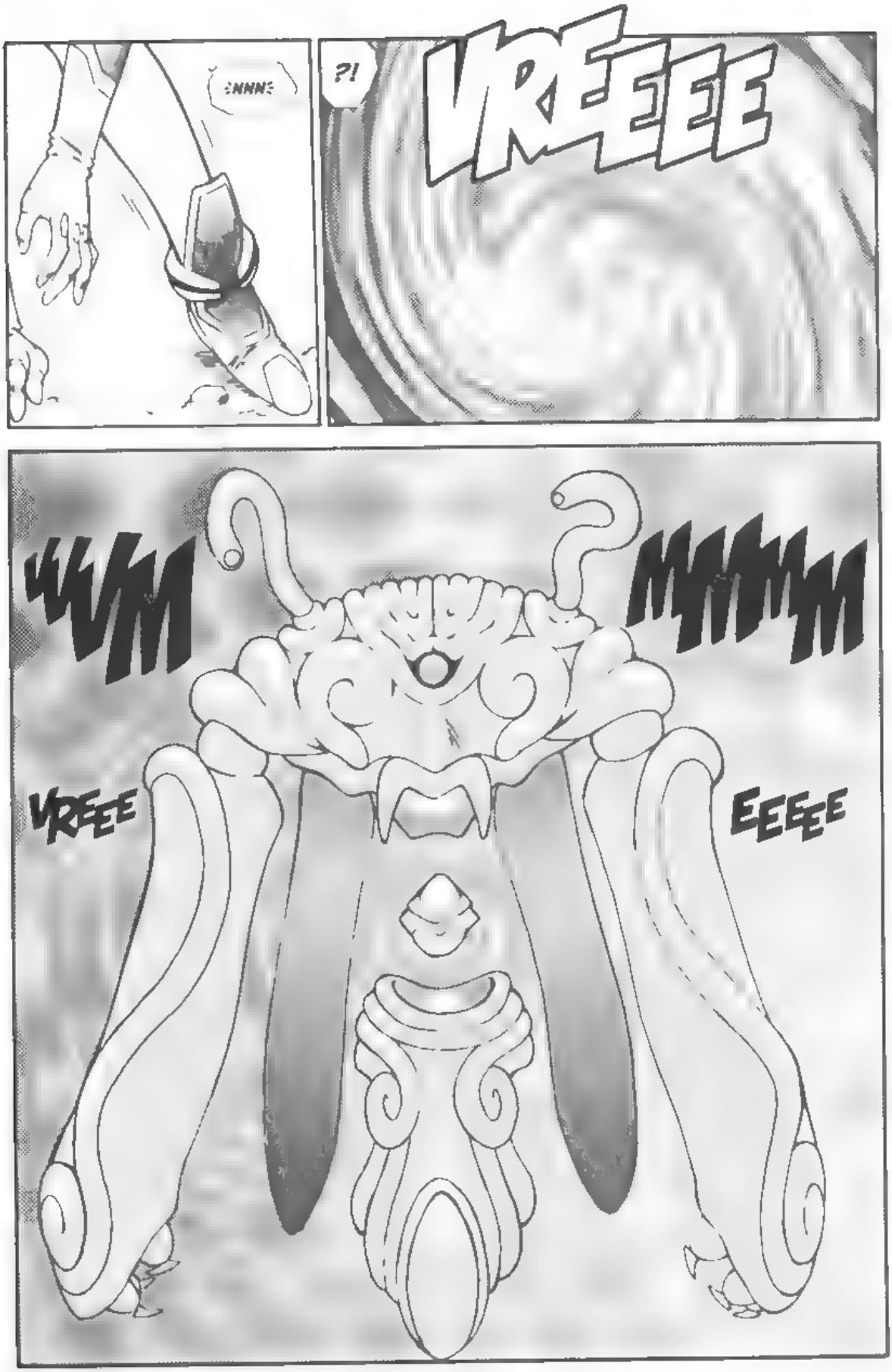
YES, FATHER?
APEP...! THANK GOD...!
HERE'S OUR STATUS--
-WE'VE BLOCKADED NUMBER ONE AND NUMBER THREE IN THE CONSTRUCTION ZONE UNDER THE DOME...
...BUT IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY BREAK THROUGH OUR JURY-RIGGED DEFENSE SHIELD!
WE NEED THAT EMBLEM SEED, NOW!
IF THEY REACH THE DOME'S REACTOR, WE'RE FINISHED!
YOU'VE GOT TO BRING US THAT SEED FIRST... EVERY SECOND COUNTS!
SIR!
YOUR TRANSPORT IS READY!

DUTY CALLS.
HIKARU... A BRIEF PARTING, ONLY.
I'LL BE WAITING, APEP. .
STAY SAFE, YOU TWO!
BRAKKA
BRAKKA

?!
FSSHT
SKRKK
WH
KOOM

S-SIR... HURRY...!
KRIKK
KRAKK
LOOK OUT--

RMBB
RMBB
KCHNNK
:NNN:
A-
APEP...!
APEP!
:NNGH:
:KOFF:
H-
HIKARU...!
I'M
HERE...
...I'M
STILL
ALIVE...


:NNNE
?!
VREEEE
WWM
MMMM
VREEE
EEEEE

ACT 14

APEP!
APEP!
HIKARU--
DON'T!

!
HIKARU
I'M HERE...
I'M STILL ALIVE...
APEP!
OH, APEP--
?!
WHOOSH
FWOOSH

VREEE
NUMBER ONE--?
IT WAS BLOCKADED IN THE CONSTRUCTION ZONE, FOUR KILOMETERS FROM HERE, ONLY SECONDS AGO
HOW--?
VREEE
VREEE
!
SHRKK
VREEE
HIKARU! KEI!
RUN!

BZZZK

KABOOM
KABOOM

:NNGH:
ZZRAKK
SHRKK
SHRKK
KLINKK
KCHNNK
THNK

THE SEED--!
WHSH
THAPP
BWEEE
THE EMBLEM SEED... IT'S... REACTING?
?!
BWEE

IT'S SIGNALING TO NUMBER ONE...?
VREEE
DETECTED: SUBJECT'S DISPLAY OF ENERGY MANIPULATION
SUBJECT DISPLAYS INHERITOR METATALENT PROFILE
IMPLEMENTING SUITABILITY TESTING
CANNING SUBJECT'S GENETIC DATA
SUITABILITY CONFIRMED
MISSION COMPLETED
SUSPENDING ALL FUNCTIONS
VMMM
MMMMM
WHSHH
WHSHH

VMMM
MMMM
KLUNKK
VMMMM
IT JUST... SHUT DOWN...?
BUT WHY...?
H-HIKARU...
HIKARU!

OH, GOD...
HIKARU...
HIKARU...!

...KEI...
S-SIS...?
:KOFFE
Y-YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, KEI...?
SOMETHING... D-DEBRIS, MAYBE... HIT ME, I'M AFRAID... :GKK:
"S-SORRY LITTLE SISTER ."

...DON'T MAKE... SAD FACE... LIKE THAT... :HKK:... DOESN'T SUIT YOU...
...THE MAN I... F-FELL IN LOVE WITH... IS ALWAYS COOL... AND IN CONTROL... :NNHH:
!
BREEP BREEP
FWPP
LISTEN CLOSELY, APEP! NUMBER ONE AND NUMBER THREE HAVE SLIPPED THE BLOCKADE! THEY MAY BE HEADED YOUR WAY, SO BE ON GUARD!
KCHAK
APEP?
APEP? WHAT'S WRONG?

KLAK
KLAK
THIPP
:KOFF:...
APEP...
KCHAK
...APEP
...D-DO
YOUR
JOB...
:GHKK:

FATHER...? NUMBER ONE HAS SUDDENLY STOPPED DEAD... POWERED DOWN... I... I DON'T KNOW WHY...
WHAT? ARE YOU SERIOUS? THAT'S UNPRECEDENTED! GIVE ME YOUR COORDINATES, APEP!
WHAT'S THAT? AH! LISTEN TO THIS, APEP... WE'VE LOCATED NUMBER THREE!
IT'S HEADED FOR THE OTHER EMBLEM SEED, THE ONE WE TOOK TO THE SHELTER... IF IT BREAKS THROUGH, THE CASUALTIES COULD BE HORRENDOUS...!
WE'LL HAVE TO RETHINK OUR DEFENSIVE MEASURES!
GET BACK HERE QUICKLY, APEP!
BREEP

KOFF
G-GO, APEP. YOUR FATHER MISSES YOU.
H-HIKARU-NO...!

GKK
BURRK
KFF
KFF
AHKK
NNNH
HIKARU...
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

KEI, TAKE CARE OF MY WIFE
WH...
... WHAT...?
APEP... YOU CAN'T...
APEP!
C-COME BACK... YOU CAN'T LEAVE...!

HIKARU... WHY DID YOU LET HIM GO...?
MY B-BROTHER, JUST WALKING AWAY. . IT'S... IT'S NOT FAIR...!
KEI, PLEASE UNDERSTAND...
:HKK:
...THE APEP I LOVE... IS THE APEP WHO ALWAYS DOES... WHAT HE HAS TO DO...
... IF... F HE DIDN'T... HE WOULDN'T BE THE APEP I LOVE...
THAT'S... THAT'S CRAZY...! HE SHOULD BE WITH YOU! HE SHOULD BE WITH YOU, RIGHT NOW!
RIGHT NOW. . WHEN YOU'RE... YOU'RE...
KEI... LITTLE SISTER... YOU WANT A MAN WHO'LL. . PROTECT YOU... :HUHH: ... STAY BY... YOUR SIDE...
:HHNNE:
I HOPE YOU MEET... THAT KIND OF MAN... SOMEDAY. . :HKK:
BLRRP
:KOFF:
SPLIPP. !

S-SIS...
PLEASE... DON'T HATE ME!
HIK
KEI SOMEDAY YOU'LL UNDER-STAND.
H-HIKARU?
S-SIS?

BLOOD...
NOOOO!

Act 15

K-KEI!
KEI!
S-SIS.
...HIKARU...

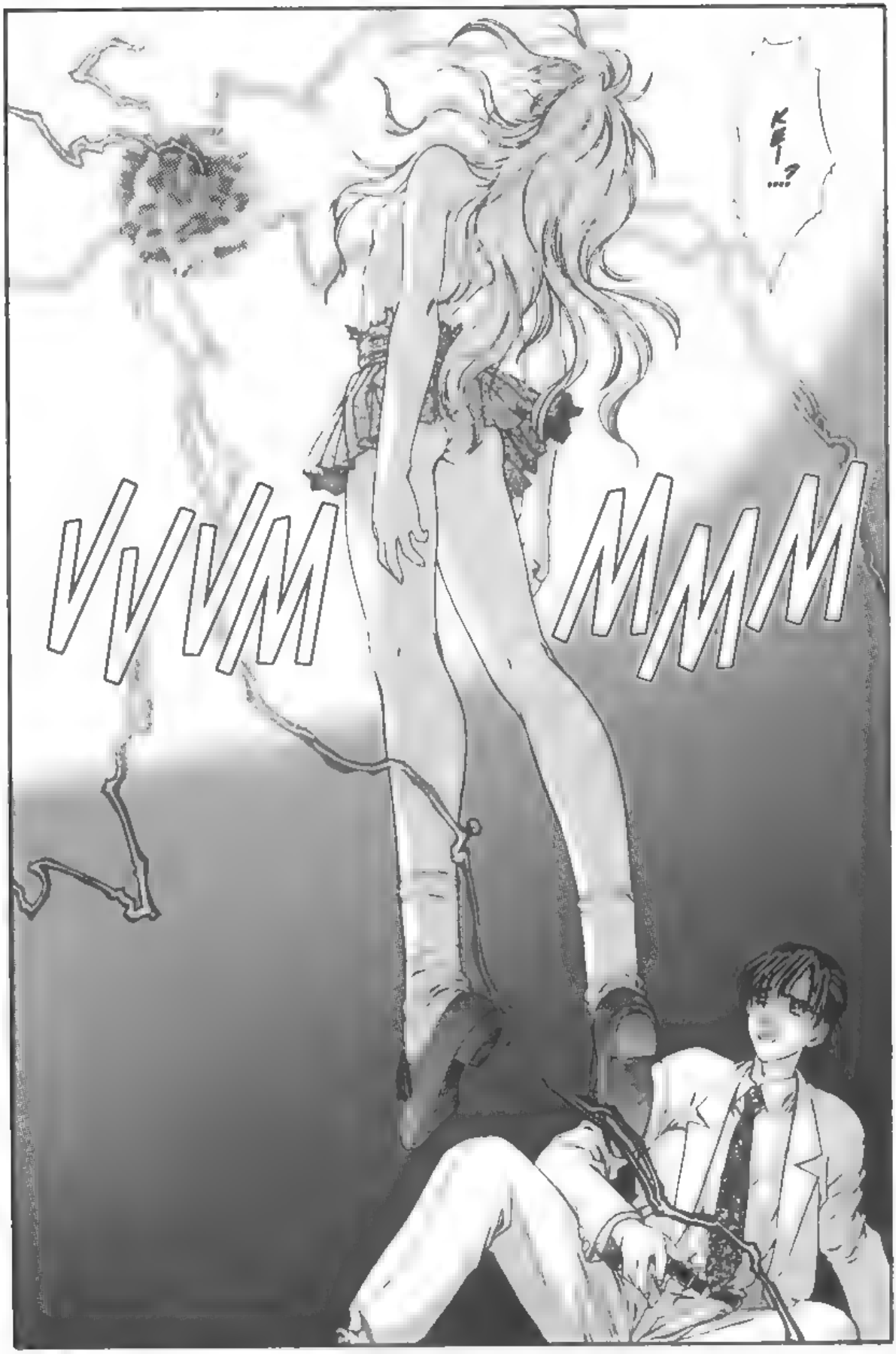
!
LEAVE US ALONE, DAMN IT!

shaaa
WSSH

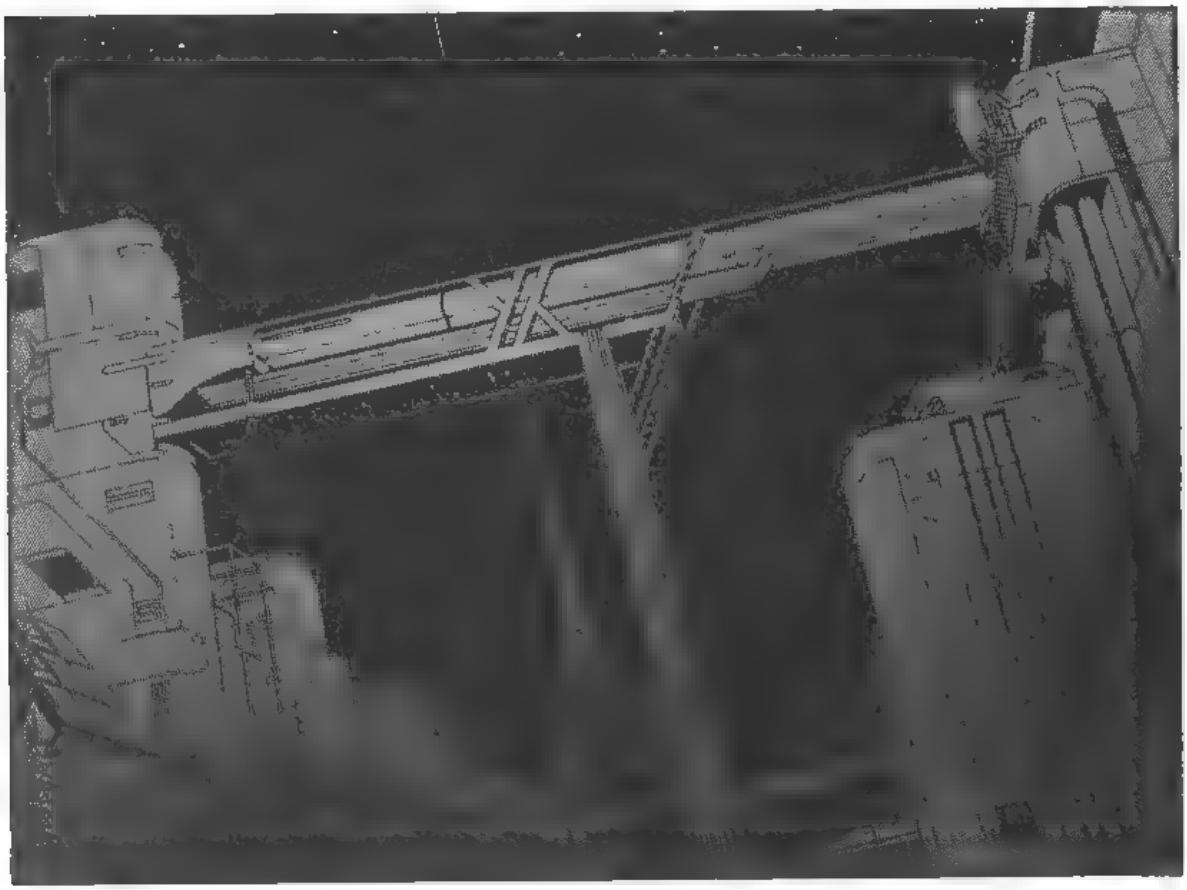
WHOOSH
SUSPENDING COMBAT MODE
POTENTIAL INHERITOR METATALENT PROFILE DETECTED
FWPP
FWPP
FWPP
?!
VREEEEEEEEE

IMPLEMENTING SUITABILITY TESTING
SCANNING SUBJECT'S GENETIC DATA
FULL INHERITOR QUALIFICATION: NEGATIVE
SUBJECT STATUS: UNSUITABLE
KHAK

ZZZZZK
KEII
LOOK OUT--!
ZZZZK
GYAAA!
VMMMM
BZZZAKK
VMMM

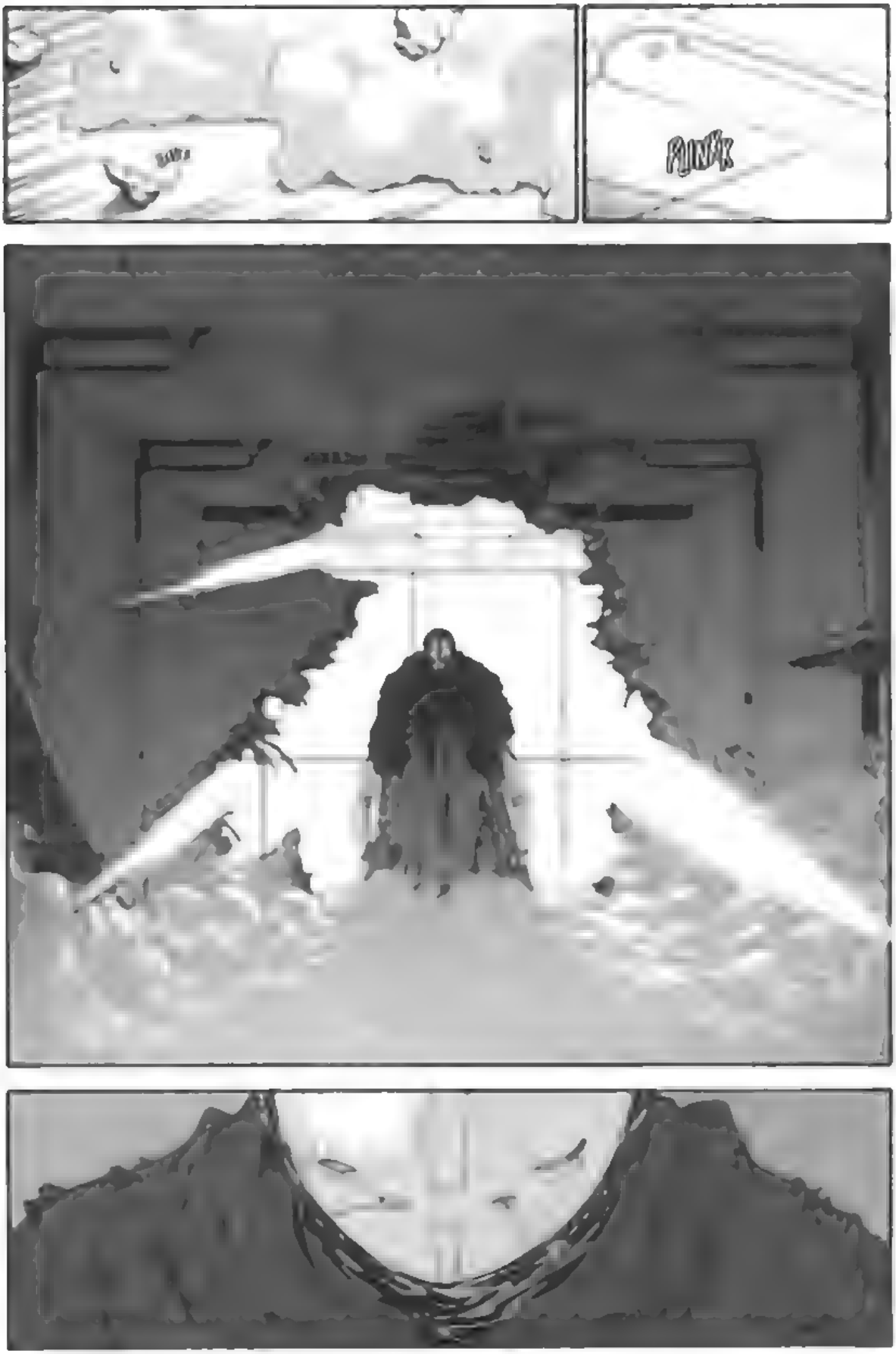

HE!...?
WWW
MMM

ZZZK
ZZZK
HUNF
KZZZK
ZZZZRKK



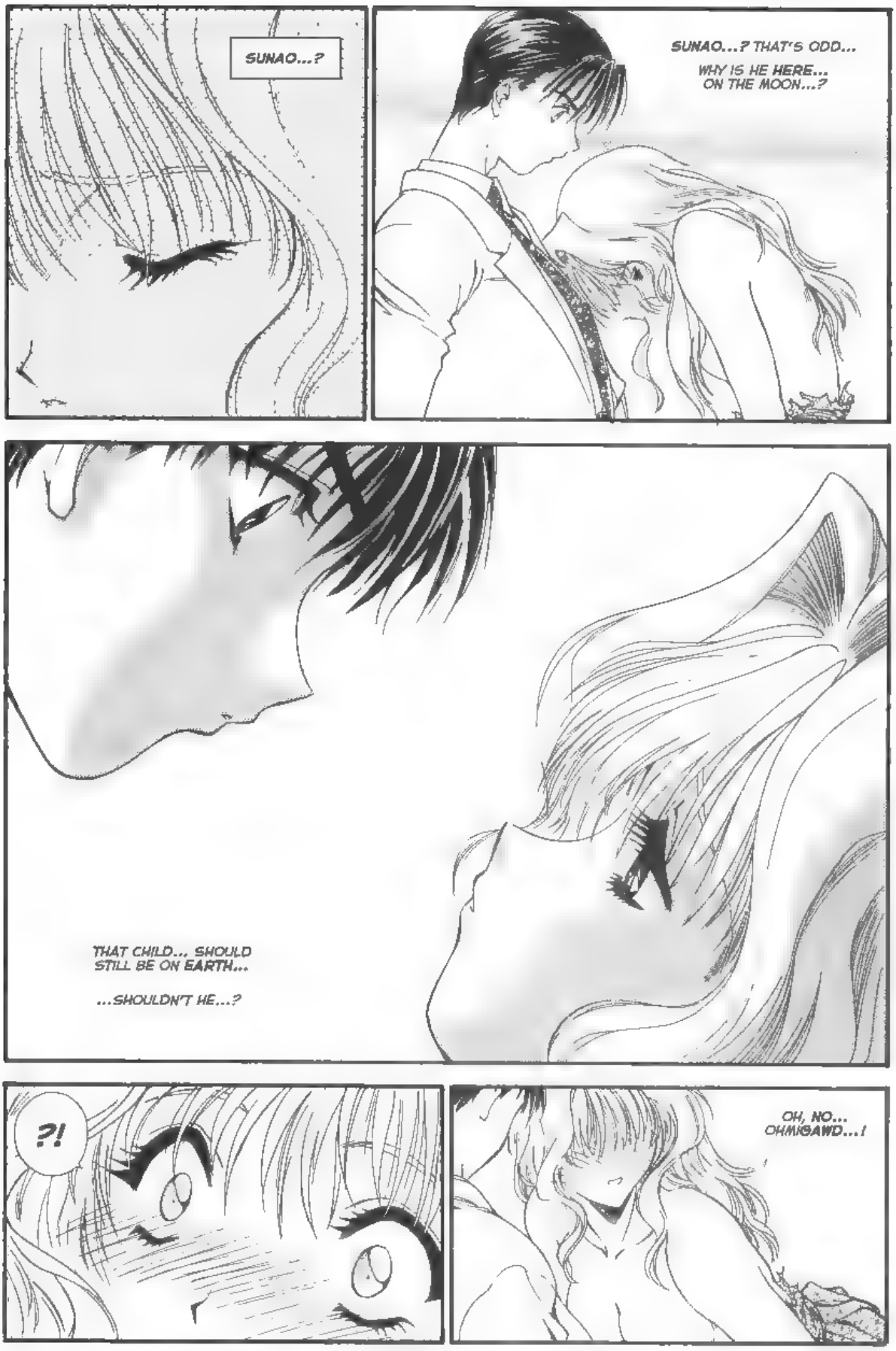
ZZZK
ZZZK
KZZK
KZZZK
APEP...
...MY BROTHER...
KZZZK
FSHH
SHOOM

FWOOSH
VREEE
WHSHH
ZZZRAK
BKOOM



SHRKk
SUNAO...

HEH...!
NNHH!
WHWPP
K-KEI...?


SUNAO...?
SUNAO...? THAT'S ODD...
WHY IS HE HERE... ON THE MOON...?
THAT CHILD... SHOULD STILL BE ON EARTH...
...SHOULDN'T HE...?
?!
OH, NO... OHMIGAWD...!

THIS . THIS...
I'M N-NAKED!
...THIS CAN'T...
NAKED... AND ON TOP OF SOME GUY!
...THIS CAN'T BE ..
NAKED!
...THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING...!
EEK!
:HOOG:
WHOAK
K-KEI...?
JEEz ..!

D-DON'T LOOK AT ME, YOU PERVERT!
KE!
BACK TO NORMAL, I SEE!
DON'T LOOK... BUT GIMME YOUR JACKET...!
HA HA HA!
FWPP
RIGHT, RIGHT...!

....
KEI... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT..?
SUNAO... SUNAO OUMI...? BUT. . YOU CAN'T BE HERE, ON THE MOON. . CAN YOU?
A-AND YOU'RE ALL BROWN UP, TOO... HOW...?

H-HEY! UM... EXCUSE ME...?!
KEI... IT R-REALLY IS YOU... AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...
...AND YOU REMEMBER ME, FINALLY...!

MMM...
BUT, KEI... WHY D DN'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME, BEFORE...?
AND... AND THEY SAID YOU DIED, YEARS AGO, IN THAT LUNAR EXPLOSION... WHY...?
I... DIED? BUT THAT'S NOT... I DON'T UNDER-STAND...
H-HIKARU... MY SISTER... SHE DIED IN THAT... INCIDENT...
...I... I REMEMBER HER... DYING. . IT WAS H-HORRIBLE...!
...THEN... THEN... I DON'T REMEMBER ANY MORE...

KEI... HER MEMORY'S GONE... AGAIN...?
UM, SUNAO...?

THAT... THAT THING... IT SCARES ME...!

KEI .. CAN YOU WALK? WE SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE...
...AND WE'VE GOT TO F ND MISS M-ZAK--

BUT I THINK I'VE SEEN SOMETHING LIKE IT BEFORE...

AHEM.
YOU CALLED?

VRRT

MISS M-ZAK...! YOU'RE ALL, UM... UH... WHOA!
THIS? I WAS A TEENSY BIT CARELESS, I'M AFRAID...
SO. WHAT'S THIS BEASTIE, THEN?
DAMN. DON'T TELL ME...
...THIS MUST BE ONE OF THE FIVE...
THMPP

AIM!
...!
KEI... WHAT'S WRONG, DEAR...?
:SOB:
UM... UM, YOU SEE, MISS M-ZAK... WHEN THAT THING ATTACKED US...
KEI WAS... WELL, FOR A MOMENT OR TWO, SHE WAS, UM...
VRRT
KCHK

..SHE WAS DEAD, MISS M-ZAK.
I SEE. THEN IT SEEMS SHE'S MANAGED TO RESURRECT HERSELF... HASN'T SHE?
HUH?
I WAS... DEAD...? BUT... THAT'S WRONG...!
I.. I TOLD YOU, SUNAO
...MY SISTER'S THE ONE WHO DIED, SEE?
I DIDN'T... I MEAN, I DON'T THINK I... I..
OH, ATTIM...
...I REMEMBERED SUNAO JUST NOW...
...FROM WHEN HE WAS A CHILD... ON EARTH, AND...

HMM...?
ENOUGH, DEAR. EXPLANATIONS CAN WAIT.
WITHOUT DOCTOR HEIDEMANN, WE CAN'T--
KREEE
KCHAK
?!
SHH
SHH

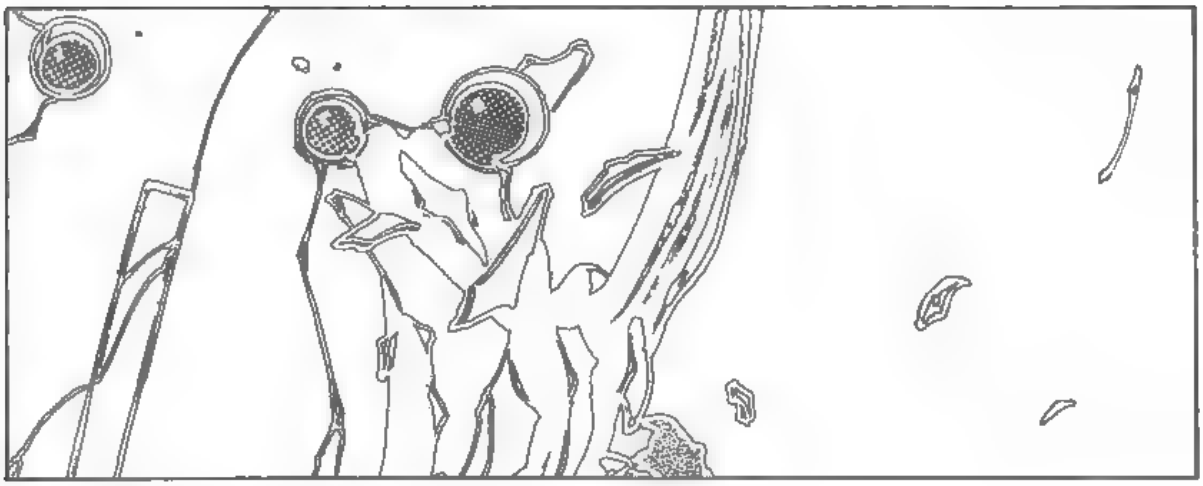
SHING
WHKRAK
THOK
SHIK

WHAT THE HELL?!
!

Act 16

SHRAKK
WH CHING
SHRIPP

SKRIKK
SKRIKK



AND WITH THAT SMALL, BARELY AUDIBLE SOUND, I *KNOW...*

...WE'RE AS GOOD AS DEAD!

KLAK KLAK
AAA
KCHNNK
KCHNNK

=HAHH=
=HAHH=
=HAHH=
=HAHH=
WHAT IS IT WAITING FOR. .?
VRTTT
VREEE

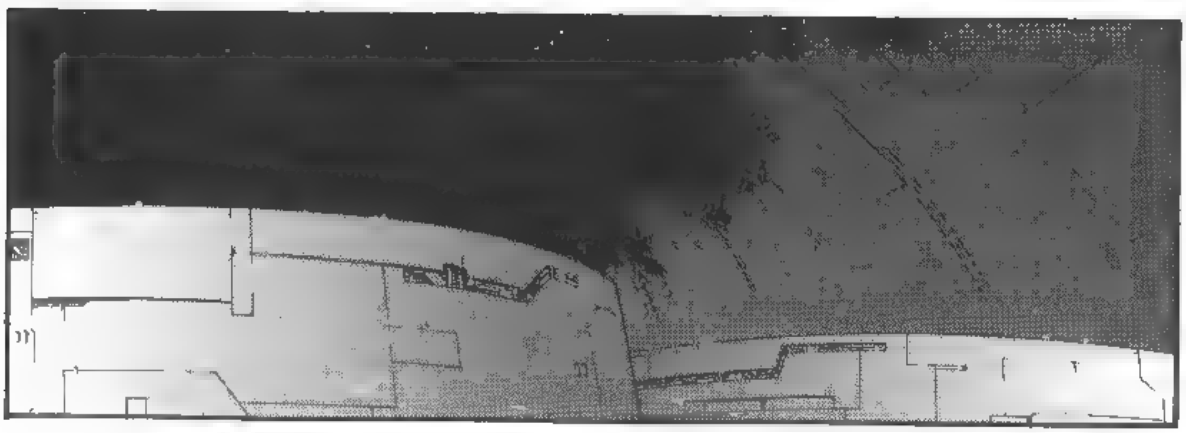
WHSSH
AH—P!
WHSHH
VMM
MMMM

IT JUST ATTACKED US... ON A WHIM...!
NOT BLOODY LIKELY.
COULD I HAVE INFLICTED ENOUGH DAMAGE TO DRIVE IT OFF...?
:HAHH:

HEYYY!
COOL! YOU BEAT HIM, ATTIM!
YAY!
MY...!
THAT CREATURE MANAGED TO SHATTER SINGLE-CRYSTAL CARBON HYPERFIBER...
KCHNKK
HEH...
:NNN:

!
NNN»
KEI!
KEI!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...? KEI?

AND EXACTLY *WHAT* ARE YOU *SMIRKING* ABOUT, APEP?
I *SHOULDN'T* HAVE TO TELL YOU-- *NO ONE* IS TO REMOVE THE *G-SEED* FROM STORAGE WITHOUT *MY* SAY-SO! AND THAT MEANS *YOU TOO*, MR. *ACTING DIRECTOR!*
CONSIDER *ME SEVERELY* CHASTISED.
I MUST *BEG* YOUR FORGIVE-NESS...
...AND *ENDEAVOR* NOT TO BE SO *NAUGHTY* IN THE FUTURE...!
THAT'S *MY* PROMISE, FAWN.



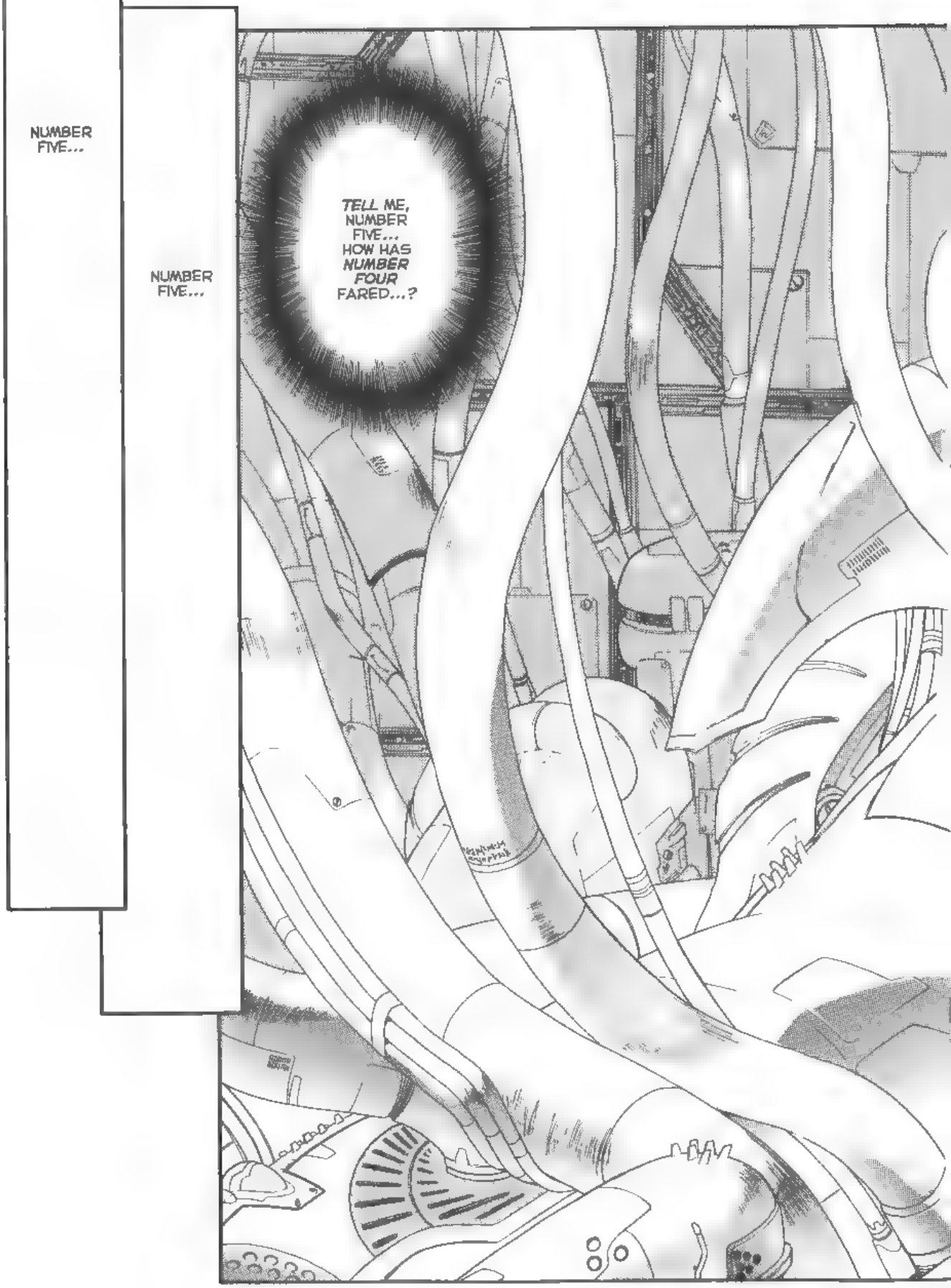
SO...PROMISE ME THAT THE CONTENTS OF THAT TERRIBLY "HUSH-HUSH" VIDEO I SHOWED YOU WILL REMAIN OUR LITTLE SECRET...?
UM...I PROMISE, APEP...!
THANK YOU, FAWN. NOW, THERE'S ONE LAST ISSUE WE NEED TO--
!
APEP...?
MMM? OH, RIGHT. WE NEED TO ADDRESS G-SEED SECURITY PROCEDURES.
AH...SO MY DEAR SISTER HAS RETURNED, HAS SHE...?

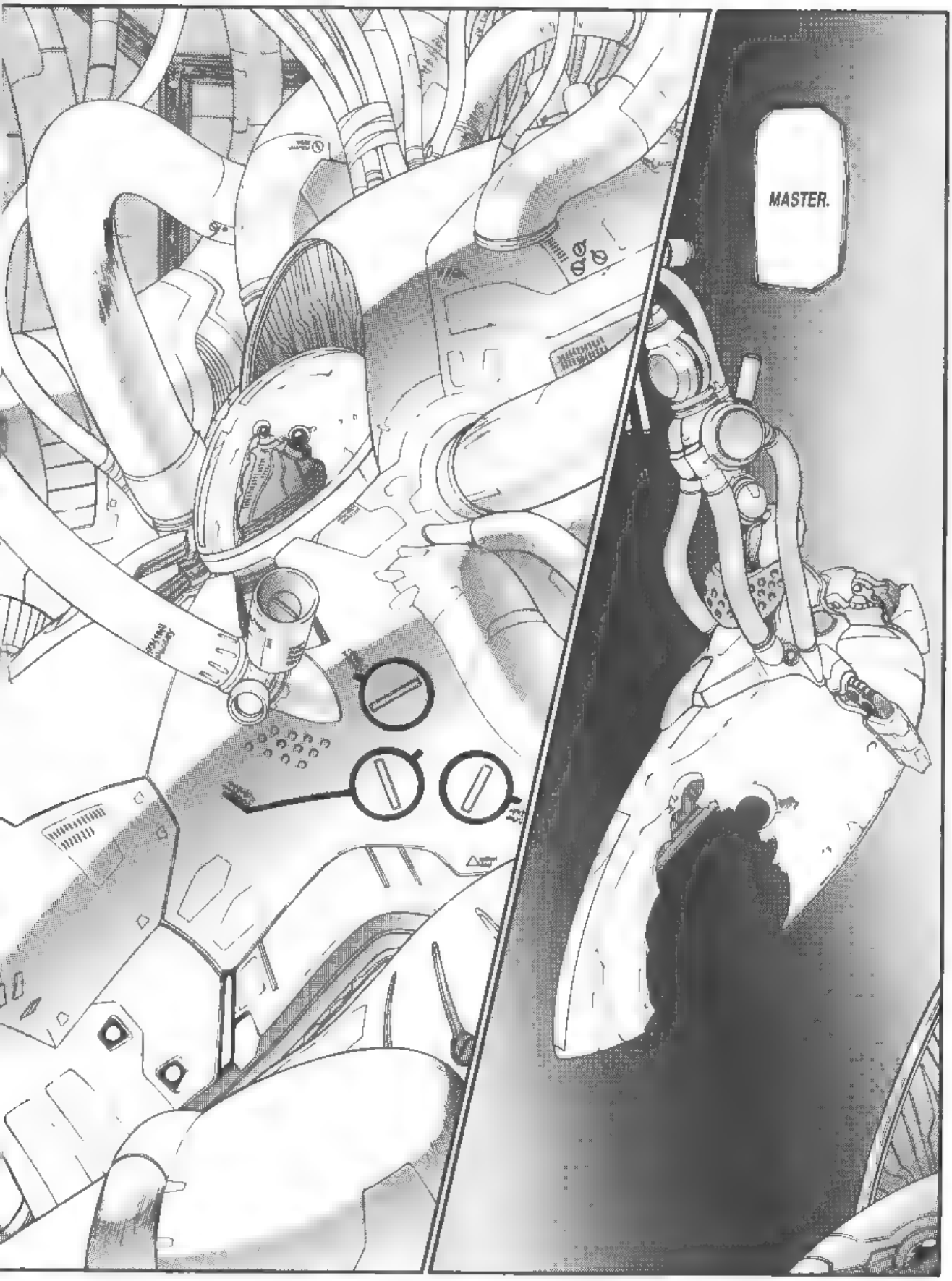
S--
SUNAO...?
I'M JUS'...
JUS'
FINE...!
LET'S
GO.
GO...?
W-
WHERE
...?
TO THE
GOVERNMENT,
SUNAO.
TO U.N. LUNAR
HEADQUARTERS...

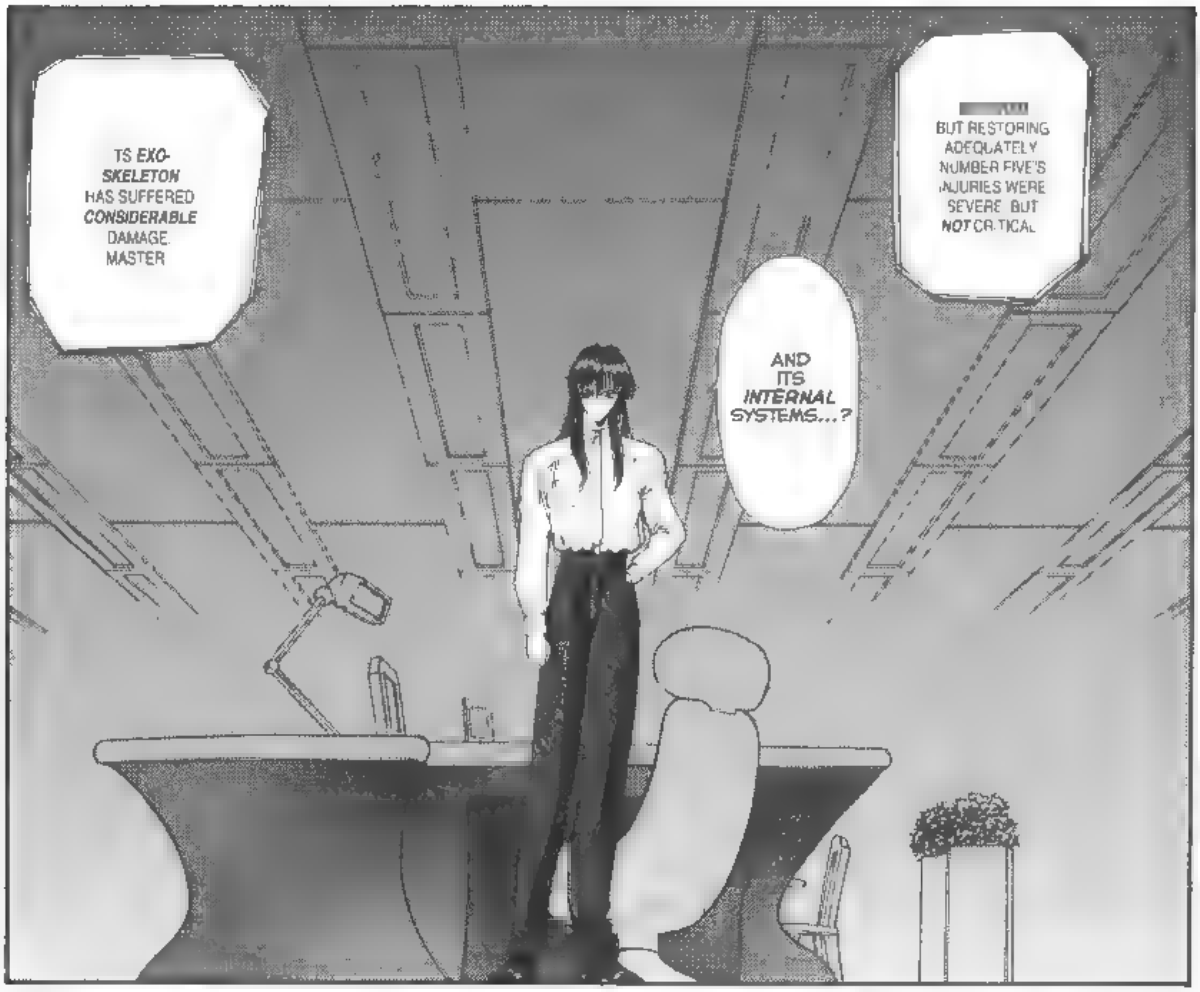
AND HERE'S THE G-SEED, FOR YOUR SAFEKEEPING...
GYEEK--!
FMP
A-A-APEP...! GEEZ!
AH, THE IMPROPRIETY... AND ME, AN ACTING DIRECTOR...
YOU'RE SO AWFUL, APEP...!
HARASSING ME LIKE... LIKE SOME LECHEROUS OLD FART...!
HA HA HA HA! YOU'VE CUT ME TO THE QUICK, FAWN!

TO THE OLD AND LECHEROUS QUICK, AT THAT!
PSHH
HA HA HA HA...
...HA.
NUMBER FIVE.
CAN YOU HEAR ME, NUMBER FIVE?

Act 17


NUMBER FIVE...
NUMBER FIVE...
TELL ME, NUMBER FIVE... HOW HAS NUMBER FOUR FARED...?

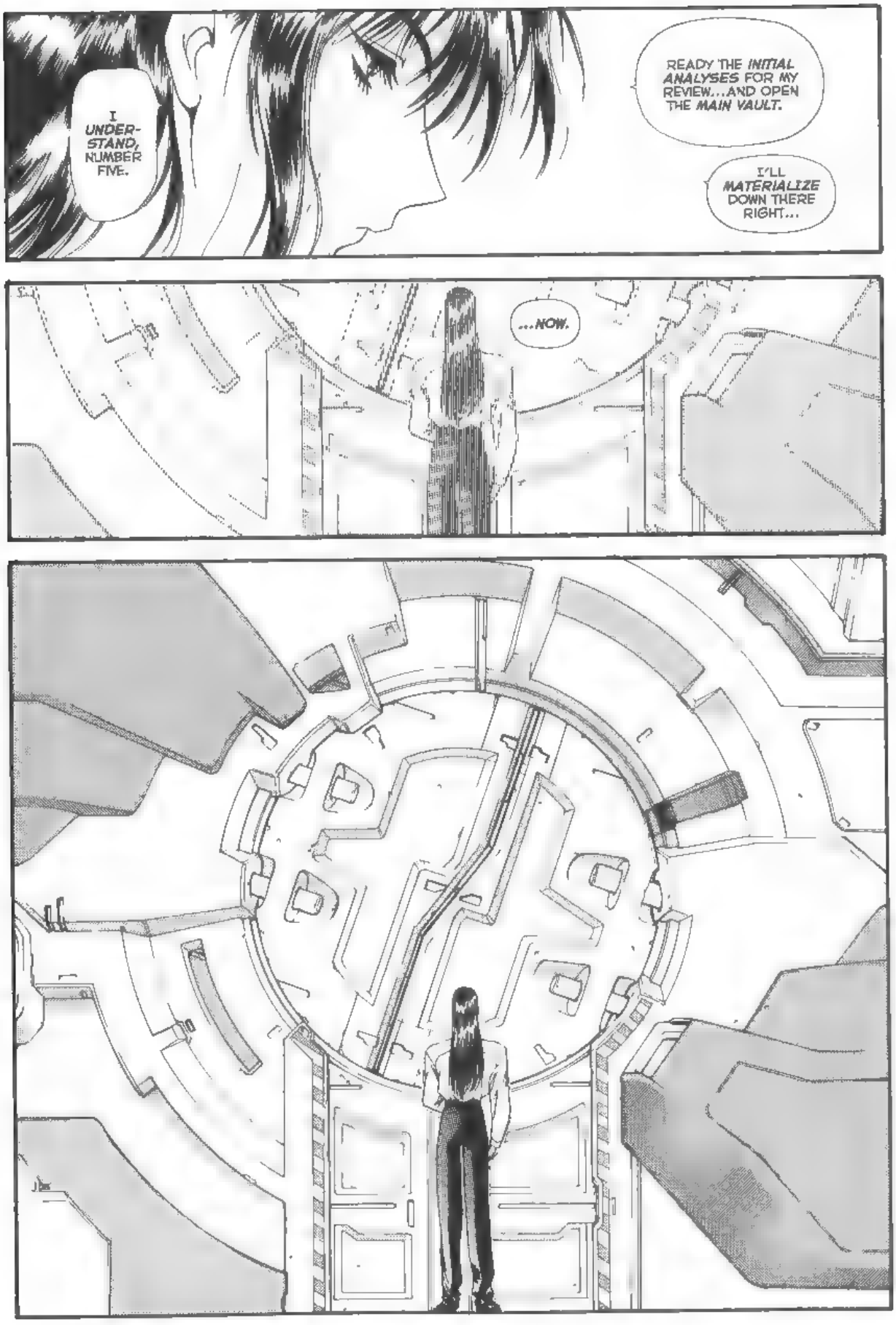

MASTER.


TS EXO-SKELETON HAS SUFFERED CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE, MASTER
BUT RESTORING ADEQUATELY NUMBER FIVE'S INJURIES WERE SEVERE BUT NOT CRITICAL
AND ITS INTERNAL SYSTEMS...?

DAMAGE OF THIS LEVEL WAS PERHAPS UNAVOIDABLE. ANY INHERITOR-PROFILE HUMAN POSSESSING AN EMBLEM SEED COULD MANIFEST POWERFUL METATALENTS LIKE YOUR OWN, MASTER

THEN, HAS KEI FULLY REAWAKENED... OR RECONSTITUTED, AT LEAST...?

FROM *INITIAL* ANALYSIS OF THE ENCOUNTER, THIS *APPEARS* TO BE THE CASE. *ALSO*...
NUMBER FOUR RECORDED A *UNIQUE RESPONSE* FROM ONE OF THE HUMANS IT ENCOUNTERED
HMM...
...A *THIRD* POTENTIAL INHERITOR PROFILE, PERHAPS...?
IMPOSSIBLE TO *DETERMINE* AT THIS TIME MASTER
FAR MORE *DETAILED* ANALYSIS OF THE [illegible] NECESSARY BEFORE WE CAN DRAW ANY CONCLUSIONS.

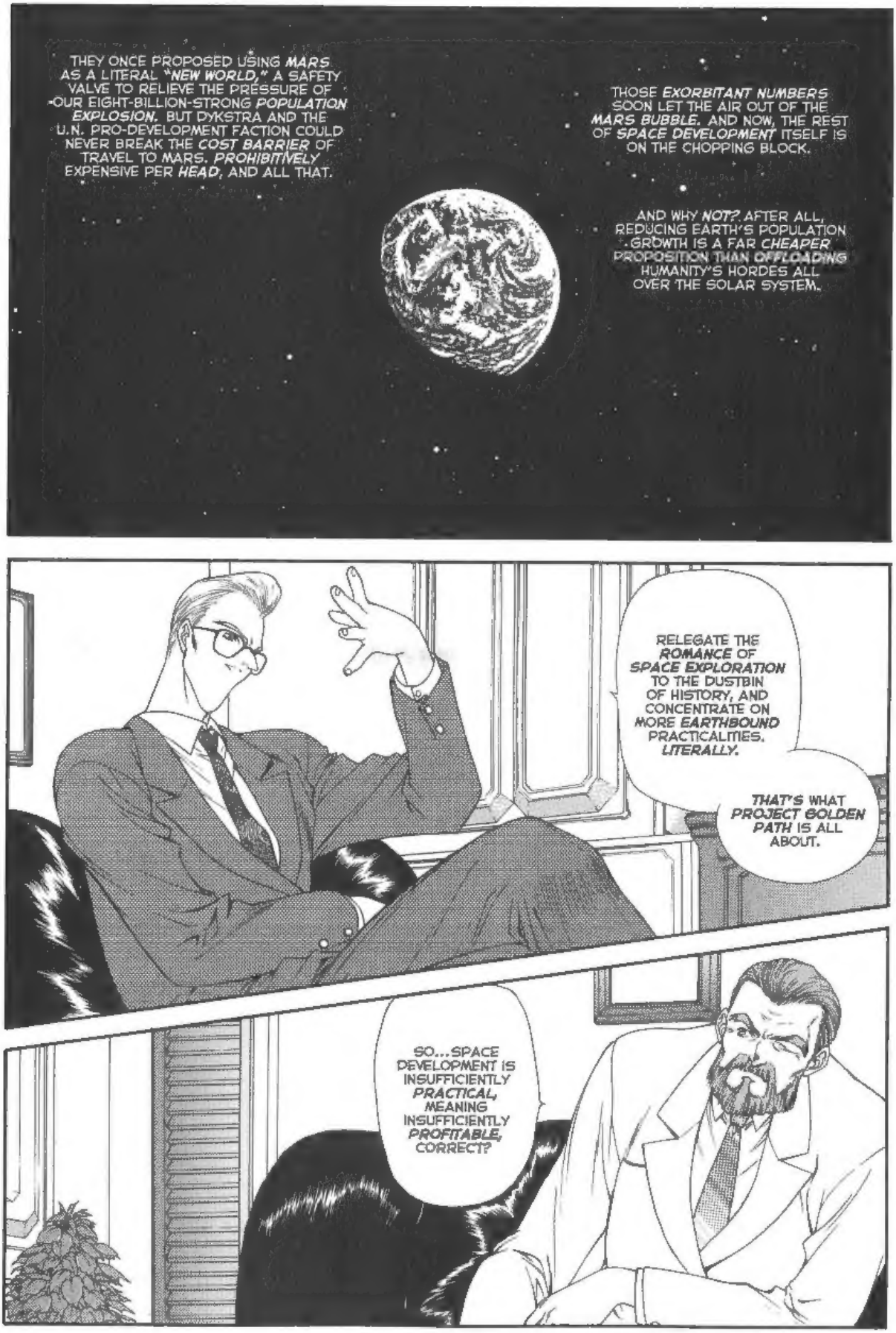

I UNDER-STAND, NUMBER FIVE.
READY THE INITIAL ANALYSES FOR MY REVIEW...AND OPEN THE MAIN VAULT.
I'LL MATERIALIZE DOWN THERE RIGHT...
...NOW.

YOU MAY PROCEED WITH FULL REGENERATION OF NUMBER FOUR.
AFFIRMATIVE, MASTER
KSHAK
WE WAITED IN DARKNESS THROUGH THE LONG, LONG END OF DAYS
A MINOR SACRIFICE LIKE NUMBER FOUR'S IS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR THE CHANCE TO CAST OFF THE YOKE OF THE OTHERS.
VMMM
I NEED A PERFECTED KEI, IN ORDER TO BUILD A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE CAN LIVE LIKE HUMAN BEINGS...
...EVEN IF I MUST DESTROY EVERYTHING TO BRING THAT WORLD ABOUT.

RIGHT THIS WAY, DOCTOR.
AH! [redacted]!
COME RIGHT IN.
WHEN I HEARD THAT YOU WERE DISPATCHED HERE ON *SPECIAL ORDERS* FROM U.N. HEADQUARTERS, I WAS, QUITE FRANKLY, *AMAZED.*
I HAD ASSUMED YOU WOULD GET THE *AXE* FOR LAST YEAR'S *TRAGIC ACCIDENT.*
WHAT [redacted] DID YOU USE, HEIDEMANN?

HEADQUARTERS UNDERSTANDS... AND APPRECIATES... THAT I'M THE ONLY ONE QUALIFIED TO INVESTIGATE THE STARSHIP.
I'VE BEEN GIVEN FULL AUTHORITY TO MANAGE THE EMBLEM SEEDS.
PERHAPS YOU CAN TELL ME WHY YOU KEPT ME WAITING FOR A FULL DAY...REPRESENTATIVE ERNEST.
AS U.N. LUNAR REPRESENTATIVE, THIS WHOLE INDEPENDENCE QUESTION KEEPS ME RATHER BUSY, YOU KNOW. ONLY THREE YEARS TO GO, AND ALL THAT.
I'VE BEEN MEDIATING BETWEEN DYKSTRA AND LUNAR CITY FOR DAYS.
ABOUT DYKSTRA CORPORATION, ERNEST...
AH. I'D ANTICIPATED THAT YOU MIGHT BE WORRIED ABOUT HOW CLOSELY THEY'RE WORKING WITH THE FAMED KOROLEV ADVANCED RESEARCH LABORATORY ON THE DARK SIDE.
WELL, OUR SOURCES HAVE INDEED CONFIRMED THAT DYKSTRA WANTS US OUT OF THE LOOP, SO THEY CAN MONOPOLIZE STARSHIP TECHNOLOGY FOR THEMSELVES.
HMM. SAID INFORMATION COURTESY OF YOUR NETWORK OF SPIES AND INFORMANTS, I ASSUME?

NOW, THAT'S NOT NICE, HEIDEMANN. IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW WHAT OUR CORPORATE PARTNER IS UP TO, ISN'T IT?
CALL THEM SPIES, INFORMANTS, OR JUST GOOD CITIZENS, OUR ASSETS AT DYKSTRA ARE KEEPING US WELL-INFORMED.
WELL, THEN... WHY DO YOUR ASSETS THINK DYKSTRA IS SO INTERESTED IN THE STARSHIP?
IT'S OBVIOUS, REALLY. YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH THAT SCHEME HEADQUARTERS KEEPS PUSHING, PROJECT GOLDEN PATH? AIMING TO RESTRAIN POPULATION GROWTH AND ENERGY CONSUMPTION?
WELL, IF GOLDEN PATH IS EVER IMPLEMENTED, EARTH'S GROWTH RATE WILL DROP TO ZERO... OR EVEN LOWER.
AS DEFICITS THEN WORSEN, THE BUDGET FOR SPACE DEVELOPMENT WILL BE SLASHED, OF COURSE--AND THE FUNDS REDIRECTED TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, HEALTH CARE... THAT SORT OF THING.
DYKSTRA CURRENTLY RECEIVES ENORMOUS SUMS IN FUNDING FROM THE SPACE DEVELOPMENT BUDGET. IF THAT GOOSE STOPS LAYING, THEN POOR DYKSTRA WILL SOON RUN OUT OF EGGS.
I SHOULD IMAGINE THAT THEY'RE COUNTING ON STARSHIP-DERIVED TECHNOLOGY TO SAVE THEM.


THEY ONCE PROPOSED USING *MARS* AS A LITERAL *"NEW WORLD,"* A SAFETY VALVE TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE OF OUR EIGHT-BILLION-STRONG *POPULATION EXPLOSION.* BUT DYKSTRA AND THE U.N. PRO-DEVELOPMENT FACTION COULD NEVER BREAK THE *COST BARRIER* OF TRAVEL TO MARS. *PROHIBITIVELY* EXPENSIVE PER *HEAD*, AND ALL THAT.
THOSE *EXORBITANT NUMBERS* SOON LET THE AIR OUT OF THE *MARS BUBBLE.* AND NOW, THE REST OF *SPACE DEVELOPMENT* ITSELF IS ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK.
AND WHY *NOT?* AFTER ALL, REDUCING EARTH'S POPULATION GROWTH IS A FAR *CHEAPER* PROPOSITION THAN *OFFLOADING* HUMANITY'S HORDES ALL OVER THE SOLAR SYSTEM.
RELEGATE THE *ROMANCE* OF *SPACE EXPLORATION* TO THE DUSTBIN OF HISTORY, AND CONCENTRATE ON MORE *EARTHBOUND* PRACTICALITIES. *LITERALLY.*
THAT'S WHAT *PROJECT GOLDEN PATH* IS ALL ABOUT.
SO... SPACE DEVELOPMENT IS INSUFFICIENTLY *PRACTICAL,* MEANING INSUFFICIENTLY *PROFITABLE,* CORRECT?

OF COURSE, HEIDE-MANN!
WE'RE ONLY TALKING ABOUT INDEPENDENCE FOR THE MOON, THIS PETTY U.N. DUKEDOM, TO DUMP SOME EXCESS BAGGAGE. LUNAR COLONIZATION IS CONSIDERED A FINANCIAL DEBACLE, A FAILED EXPERIMENT...
...AND THE POWERS THAT BE WISH TO WASH THEIR HANDS OF THE WHOLE MESS.
NOW, DYKSTRA THINKS THAT THE EMBLEM SEEDS ARE THE ANSWER, NOT ONLY FOR THE TASK OF REVOLUTIONIZING SPACE TRAVEL INTO ECONOMIC VIABILITY...
...BUT PERHAPS EVEN FOR TERRA-FORMING MARS AND THE MOON AS WELL.
AND I SAY, MORE POWER TO THEM...!
=CHUCKLE=
SO THAT'S WHY THEY'RE INTERESTED IN THE STARSHIP? HA HA HA HA!
HEIDEMANN... WHAT THE HELL...?

REPRESENTATIVE ERNEST! YOU MAY BE AN EXCELLENT ADMINISTRATOR, BUT YOU'RE PAINFULLY IGNORANT REGARDING THE EMBLEM SEEDS!
THEY'RE NOT TOOLS TO BE COMMERCIALLY EXPLOITED! THEY'RE POTENTIAL WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, WELL CAPABLE OF EXTERMINATING HUMANITY!
"EXTERMINATING HUMANITY"...? WHAT...?
IF HEAD-QUARTERS HASN'T EVEN PROVIDED THEIR LUNAR REPRESENTATIVE WITH INFORMATION, THAT MUST MEAN SOMETHING, NO?
BUT THERE'S ONE THING I CAN TELL YOU... REMEMBER THE ENORMOUS BUDGET POURED INTO MONITORING THE STARSHIP SINCE LAST YEAR'S "ACCIDENT"?
THAT FUNDING WASN'T FOR RESEARCH-- IT WAS FOR DEFENSE!
DEFENSE? AGAINST WHAT? ARE YOU SAYING LAST YEAR WASN'T JUST AN ACCIDENT?
OUR SUPERIORS APPARENTLY DON'T CONSIDER YOU TO HAVE A NEED TO KNOW, REPRESENTATIVE ERNEST. BUT WHAT YOU DO NEED TO KNOW IS THIS...

...I WILL BE TAKING CONTROL OF THE DARK SIDE FACILITIES... BY FORCE IF NECESSARY!
THAT'S MY MANDATE FROM U.N. HEAD-QUARTERS!
THD
THD
FSS
RESEARCH? HA!
THE KOROLEV ADVANCED RESEARCH LABORATORY WAS LITTLE MORE THAN AN OFFICIAL RUSE, A COVER FOR SURVEILLANCE ON THE STARSHIP... BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT SOMEONE HAS EXPLOITED THE "RESEARCH" ANGLE, USED IT TO MAKE THE LAB A VIABLE CONCERN.
Y-YOU...
...YOU MEAN... APEP HEIDE-MANN...?
THAT'S RIGHT.
MY OWN SON...
TO BE CONTINUED...